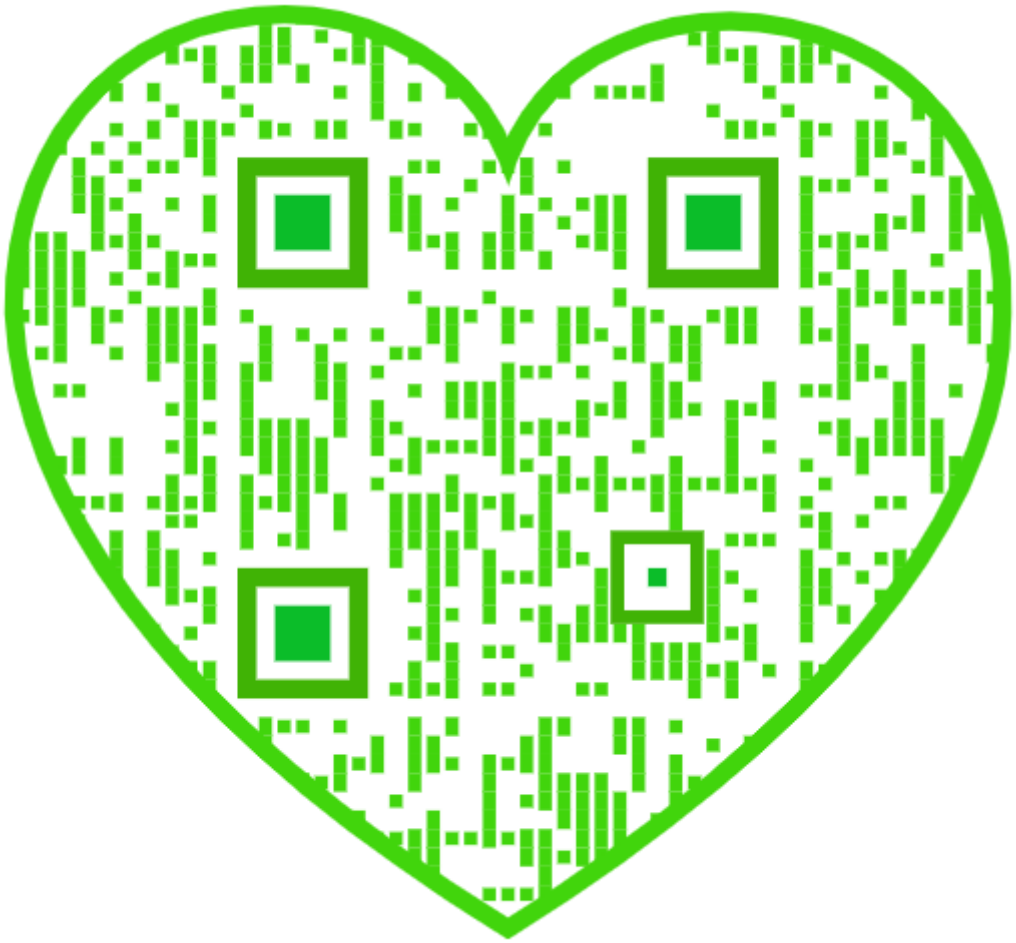
The Boy Scouts of Woodcraft Camp

THORNTON W. BURGESS



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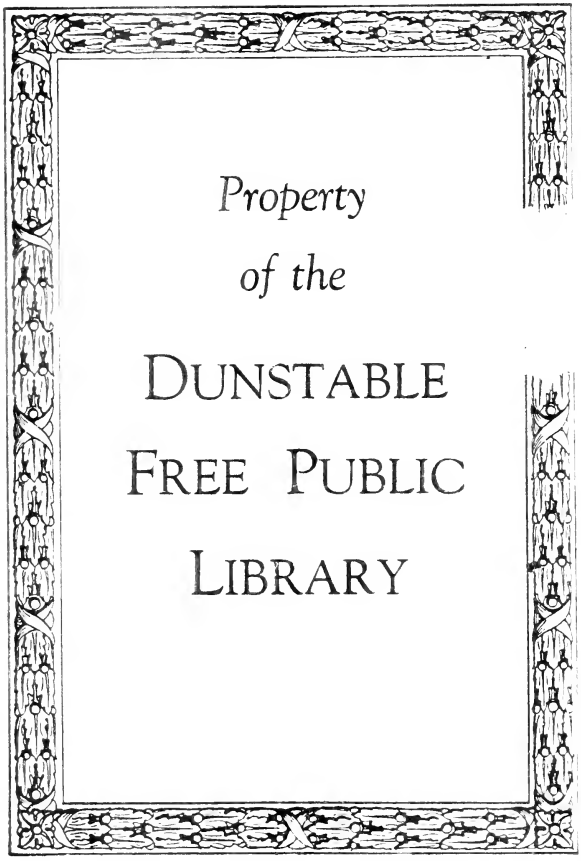

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THE CHIEF GREETED HIM PLEASANTLY

The Boy Scouts

of

Woodcraft Camp

By

Thornton W. Burgess

Author of
The Boy Scouts on Swift River
The Boy Scouts on Lost Trail
The Boy Scouts in a Trapper's Camp

Illustrated by C. S. Corson

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To my Wife

whose faith and encouragement
have placed me in her debt
beyond my power to pay

Introduction

THE Boy Scout movement has appealed to me from the very first as a long step in the right direction. It stands for an organized boyhood on a world-wide plan. It has in it the essentials for a stronger and better manhood, based on character building and physical development. Clear and clean thinking and self-reliance are its fundamental principles. Its weakness has been and is the difficulty in securing leaders, men with an understanding of and sympathy with boys, who can give the necessary time to active work in the field with the patrols, and who are themselves sufficiently versed in the lore of the woods and fields.

For years, before ever the Boy Scouts were organized, I had dreamed of a woodcraft camp for boys, a camp which in its appointments and surroundings should make constant appeal to the imagination of red-blooded, adventure-loving boys, and which should at the same time be a true "school of the woods"

wherein woodcraft and the ways of nature should be taught along much the same lines as those on which the Boy Scout movement is founded.

In this and succeeding volumes, "The Boy Scouts on Swift River," "The Boy Scouts on Lost Trail," "The Boy Scouts in a Trapper's Camp," I have sought to portray the life of such a school camp under Boy Scout rules. "The Boy Scouts of Woodcraft Camp" has been written with a twofold purpose: To stimulate on the part of every one of my boy readers a desire to master for himself the mysteries of nature's great out-of-doors, the secrets of field and wood and stream, and to show by example what the Boy Scout's oath means in the development of character. Many of the incidents in the succeeding pages are drawn from my own experiences. And if, because of reading this story, one more boy is led to the Shrine of the Hemlock, there to inhale the pungent incense from a camp-fire and to master the art of tossing a flapjack, I shall feel that I have not written in vain.

THE AUTHOR.

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The Boy Scouts of Woodcraft Camp

CHAPTER I

THE TENDERFOOT

In the semi-darkness of daybreak a boy of fourteen jumped from a Pullman sleeper and slipped a quarter into the hand of the dusky porter who handed down his luggage.

"You are sure this is Upper Chain?" he inquired.

"'Spects it is, boss, but I ain't no ways sho'. Ain't never been up this way afore," replied the porter, yawning sleepily.

The boy vainly strove to pierce the night mist which shrouded everything in ghostly gray, hoping to see the conductor or a brakeman, but he could see barely half the length of the next Pullman. A warning rumble at the head of the long train admonished him that he must act at once; he must make up

his mind to stay or he must climb aboard again, and that quickly.

The long night ride had been a momentous event to him. He had slept little, partly from the novelty of his first experience in a sleeping car, and partly from the excitement of actually being on his way into the big north woods, the Mecca of all his desires and day-dreams. Consequently he had kept a fairly close record of the train's running time, dozing off between stations but waking instantly whenever the train came to a stop. According to his reckoning he should now be at Upper Chain. He had given the porter strict orders to call him twenty minutes before reaching his destination, but to his supreme disgust he had had to perform that service for the darkey. That worthy had then been sent forward to find the conductor and make sure of their whereabouts. Unsuccessful, he had returned just in time to hand down the lad's duffle.

Now, as the preliminary jerk ran down the heavy train, the boy once more looked at his watch, and made up his mind. If the train was on time, and he felt sure that it was, this

was Upper Chain, the junction where he was to change for the final stage of his journey. He would stay.

The dark, heavy sleepers slowly crept past as the train gathered way, till suddenly he found himself staring for a moment at the red and green tail lights. Then they grew dim and blinked out in the enveloping fog. He shivered a bit, for the first time realizing how cold it was at this altitude before daybreak. And, to be quite honest, there was just a little feeling of loneliness as he made out the dim black wall of evergreens on one side and the long string of empty freight cars shutting him in on the other. The whistle of the laboring locomotive shrieked out of the darkness ahead, reverberating with an eery hollowness from mountain to mountain. Involuntarily he shivered again. Then, with a boyish laugh at his momentary loss of nerve, he shouldered his duffle bag and picked up his fishing-rod.

"Must be a depot here somewhere, and it's up to me to find it," he said aloud. "Wonder what I tipped that stupid porter for, anyway! Dad would say I'm easy. Guess I am, all right. Br-r-r-r, who says this is July?"

Trudging along the ties he soon came to the end of the string of empties and, a little way to his right, made out the dim outlines of a building. This proved to be the depot. A moment later he was in the bare, stuffy little waiting-room, in the middle of which a big stove was radiating a welcome warmth.

On a bench at one side sat two roughly-dressed men, who glanced up as the boy entered. One was in the prime of vigorous manhood. Broad of shoulder, large of frame, he was spare with the leanness of the professional woodsman, who lives up to the rule that takes nothing useless on the trail and, therefore, cannot afford to carry superfluous flesh. The gray flannel shirt, falling open at the neck, exposed a throat which, like his face, was roughened and bronzed by the weather.

The boy caught the quick glance of the keen blue eyes which, for all their kindly twinkle, bored straight through him. Instinctively he felt that here was one of the very men his imagination had so often pictured, a man skilled in woodcraft, accustomed to meeting danger, clear-headed, resourceful—in fact just such a man as was

Deerslayer, whose rifle had so often roused the echoes in these very woods.

The man beside him was short, thick-set, black-haired and mare-browed. His skin was swarthy, with just a tinge of color to hint at Indian ancestry among his French forebears. He wore the large check mackinaw of the French Canadian lumberman. Against the bench beside him rested a double-bladed axe. A pair of beady black eyes burned their way into the boy's consciousness. They were not good eyes; they seemed to carry a hint of hate and evil, an unspoken threat. The man, taking in the new khaki suit of the boy and the unsoiled case of the fishing-rod, grunted contemptuously and spat a mouthful of tobacco juice into the box of sawdust beside the stove. The boy flushed and turned to meet the kindly, luminous eyes of the other man.

"If you please, is this Upper Chain?" he inquired.

"Sure, son," was the prompt response. "Reckon we must hev come in on th' same train, only I was up forward. Guess you're bound for Woodcraft Camp. So'm I, so let's shake. My name's Jim Everly—'Big Jim'

they call me—and I'm goin' in t' guide fer Dr. Merriam th' rest o' th' summer and try to teach you youngsters a few o' th' first principles. What might yer name be an' whar be yer from?"

"Walter Upton, but the boys mostly call me 'Walt.' My home is in New York," replied the boy.

"Never hit th' trail t' th' big woods afore, did yer?" inquired the big guide, rising to stretch.

"No," said Walter, and then added eagerly: "But I've read lots and lots of books about them, and I guess I could most find my way along a trail even if I am a city tenderfoot. I've paddled a canoe some, and I know all about the habits of wild animals and how to build a fire and ——"

"Son," interrupted Big Jim, "stop right thar! Forget it—all this rot you've been a-readin'. Woodcraft never yet was larned out o' books, and it never will be. I reckon you an' me are goin' t' hitch up together fine, an' when yer go back t' yer daddy this fall yer'll be able t' take him out in th' tall timbers an' show him a few stunts what ain't

down in th' program o' city schools, but what every cottontail born in the north woods larns the second day he gets his eyes open. Now yer jes' fergit all this stuff yer've been a-readin' and stick t' me; we'll git along fine. I'll make a woodsman o' yer yer dad will be proud o'. Let's have a look outside t' see how the weather is."

As he followed the big fellow out onto the platform Walter felt his cheeks burn at this wholesale condemnation of his treasured books, one of which, "A Complete Guide to Woodcraft," was at that moment within easy reach in the top of his duffle bag. Despite his natural admiration for this big guide, to whom the mountains, lakes and woods were as an open book, and his unbounded delight in having made a good impression, Walter was not yet willing to overthrow his former idols for this new one, and he was independent enough to stand by his opinions until convinced that he was wrong.

"Have you ever read any of them, Mr. Everly?" he inquired courteously.

"Me? Read them books?" Big Jim's laugh rolled out infectiously. "What would

I read 'em for, sonny? I've seen some o' them book-writers in th' woods, and thet's enough fer me. Lordy!" and again Jim's hearty laugh rolled forth.

Walter laughed a little too, but deep in his heart he resolved that he would yet show Big Jim that there was some good in the despised books. To change the subject he inquired about the low-browed owner of the axe back by the fire.

"Him? Why, thet's Red Pete, a French canuck with some Indian in him, an' th' meanest man in th' mountains," replied Big Jim.

The mist had begun to burn off. Even as they watched they saw it roll in great tattered masses up the side of the opposite mountain. With the coming of the sun Walter was able to take note of his surroundings, and his eager eyes drank in the scene so strange to him but so familiar to his companion. It was one of those few moments which come to all of us, when we experience sensations which so impress themselves upon the memory that never are they forgotten. Walter felt a thrill that made him tingle from head to foot and, from

sheer delight, clinch his hands till the nails nearly bit into the flesh. Since he was big enough to read "Deerslayer" and "The Pathfinder" and Captain Mayne Reid's fascinating tales of adventure in forest and on the plains he had lived in an imaginary world of his own —a wonderful world, where he penetrated vast wildernesses, voyaged on great rivers and climbed snow-capped mountains. Now he was really in the great woods; his dreams were coming true in a measure.

Indeed, it was a scene to stir any red-blooded boy. A gentle breeze, moving across an unsuspected lake, rolled before it great billowing masses of vapor. The sun, just rising above the eastern hills, drew the mist swiftly up the mountainsides in broken, detached masses that eddied, separated, came together and in an incredibly short time dissipated in thin, clear air, till naught remained save in the deepest hollows not yet penetrated by the sun's rays. Walter drew a long breath.

"Oh!" he gasped, and again, "Oh!"

Big Jim looked at him curiously, while a sincere liking twinkled in his blue eyes.

"Never see a sunrise in th' mountains

afore, did yer, sonny?" he asked. "Jes' yer wait till yer see a sunup from th' top of old Baldy, and watch forty lakes throw off their night clothes all at once."

Sordid enough was the scene now revealed close at hand in the clear morning light, the ulcer of so-called civilization, to be seen wherever man has pushed the outposts of commercialism into the great forests. A dozen log houses and a few ugly frame buildings, the latter unpainted for the most part, but with one a glaring red and another a washed-out blue, dotted an irregular clearing on either side of the railroad. Close by, the tail of a log jam choked a narrow river, while the tall iron stack of a sawmill towered above the rough board roof that afforded some protection to the engine and saws. Off to the right glistened the end of a lake of which the river was the outlet, its margin a mass of stark, drowned timber. The peculiar odor of wet sawdust filled the air. A sawdust road threaded its way among the scattered buildings, and all about were unsightly piles of slabs, heaps of bark and mill waste.

But to Walter it was all fascinating. The

sky-scrapers of his native city seemed not half so wonderful as these moss and clay chinked cabins. He pinched himself to make quite sure he was awake, that it was all real. An engine and single dingy coach were backing down a siding.

"Thar's our train, son," said his companion. "Better stow yer duffle aboard. It won't pull out for half an hour, and then it'll be a twenty-minute run over t' Upper Lake. I want to see Tim Mulligan over yonder t' th' store, but I'll join yer on th' train."

Taking the hint, Walter put his duffle aboard the train beside the pack basket of his friend, and then, to kill time, started out to form a closer acquaintance with the town. From most of the houses thin columns of smoke and the odor of frying bacon or pork proclaimed that breakfast was being prepared. Occasionally he had glimpses of weary-faced women in faded calico gowns. One, standing in the doorway of her cabin, was barefooted. A frowzy-headed, dirty-faced little urchin stared at him from the shelter of her skirts. The men he met were for the most part rough, good-natured fellows, dressed in the flannel

shirt of the woods, their trousers thrust into high, laced, hobnailed boots. Several nodded kindly or exchanged a "howdy" with the bright-faced boy.

On his way back, as he neared a cabin somewhat apart from the others, he heard voices in angry dispute. Turning a corner of the cabin he was just in time to see a boy of about his own age, but a good head taller, strike a vicious blow at a whimpering hunchback. In a flash Walter confronted the astonished young ruffian, eyes flashing and fists doubled.

"You coward!" he shouted. "You miserable coward, to strike a boy smaller than yourself, and a cripple!"

For an instant the other stared. Then his face darkened with an ugly scowl, and he advanced threateningly.

"Get out av here! This ain't any av your business, ye city dude!" he growled.

"I'll make it my business when you hit a little fellow like that," replied Walter, edging between the bully and his victim.

"Want ter foight?" demanded the other.

"No, I don't," said Walter, "but I want you to leave that little chap alone."

"Huh, yez do, do yez?" responded the other, and rushing in he aimed an ugly blow at Walter's face. The fight was on.

And just here the young ruffian was treated to the greatest surprise of his bullying career. Instead of crushing his slight antagonist as he had contemptuously expected to, he lunged into empty space. The next instant he received a stinging blow fairly on the nose. For a moment he gasped from sheer surprise, then, with a howl of pain and rage, he rushed again.

To all appearances it was a most unequal match. The young backwoodsman was not only taller, but was heavy in proportion; his muscles were hardened by work and rough outdoor life in a sawmill village, and hard knocks had toughened him as well. In contrast, the city boy seemed slight and hopelessly at a disadvantage. But underneath that neat khaki jacket was a well-knit, wiry frame, and muscles developed in the home gymnasium. Moreover, Walter's father believed in teaching a boy to take care of himself, and it was not for nothing that Walter had taken lessons in boxing and wrestling.

As before, he avoided the rush by lightly side-stepping, driving in a vigorous left to the ear and following this with a right which raised a lump just under his opponent's left eye. The latter backed away. Then he came in again, but more cautiously. He was beginning to respect this elusive antagonist who hit so hard, yet managed to get away untouched. It was all so new in his experience that he was utterly at a loss to know what to expect.

Round and round they circled, each watching for an opening. Suddenly Walter took the offensive. As he started to rush he slipped in the wet sawdust. His opponent saw his advantage and swung hard, but Walter caught the blow on his right forearm, and the next instant they were locked in a clinch. This was what the bully wanted. Now he would throw his antagonist and, once he had him down, that would end the battle, for his ethics knew no quarter for a fallen foe.

But again he reckoned without his host. Scientific wrestling was an unheard-of art to the young giant, while in the home gymnasium Walter had twice won the championship

for his weight. For a few minutes they swayed this way and that, then Walter secured the lock he was trying for, there was an instant of straining muscles, then the bully was pinned flat on his back.

A big hand fell on Walter's shoulder. "Son," said Big Jim, "I hate t' break into yer morning exercise, but you an' me hev an engagement at Upper Lake, and we've got jes' two minutes t' ketch thet train."

Walter jumped up at once, and then held out his hand to the discomfited bully. "Will you shake?" he asked.

To the surprise of the delighted onlookers the fallen terror of the village arose and in a manly way, though sheepishly, shook the outstretched hand, for at heart he had the right stuff in him.

"Ye licked me fair an' square," he mumbled. "Oi wish ye'd show me some av thim thricks."

"I will if I ever have a chance. You ought to be a Boy Scout," shouted Walter as he and Big Jim sprinted for the train.

CHAPTER II

WOODCRAFT CAMP

THE light breeze which had lifted the mist at Upper Chain had dropped to a dead calm, and when Walter followed the guide from the train down to the landing on Upper Lake not a ripple broke its placid surface. As far as he could see it lay like a great magic mirror, the heavily-wooded shores reflected so clearly that the inverted forest appeared no less real than the original, so marvelously counterfeited. In every direction mountain succeeded mountain, for the most part clothed to their summits with the variegated green of the mighty woodland growth, the somber spruce of the higher slopes, black against the lighter green of yellow and white birch, maple and ash, which had reclaimed to the wilderness the vast tracts ruthlessly laid bare by reckless lumbering twenty years before. One of the nearer mountains was crowned with bare, exposed ledges to which clung a few un-

sightly blasted trunks, mute witnesses to the devastation wrought by fire.

By a peculiar optical effect produced by the angle of light in a dead calm at that time of the day, floating objects appeared magnified to many times their actual size, so that a launch some two miles distant, whose rapid put-put had drawn their attention when they first stepped from the train, appeared to be less than half that distance away.

Big Jim looked at it long and steadily, shading his eyes with a big hand.

"Thet's 'Woodcraft Girl' all right," he said, "and I reckon they're comin' down fer us. Yer make yerself t' home, son, while I run back up yonder t' th' hotel and rastle up some grub. We'll be some hungry before we reach camp if I don't."

Walter seated himself on the end of the pier and drank in the beauty of the exquisite scene. Alongside a little mail boat was getting up steam, her crew busily stowing away express packages and supplies of all kinds for the various camps and hotels scattered along the lake. Half a dozen passengers were already aboard. Two Adirondack skiffs, each pulled

by a brawny guide, a fisherman lolling at ease in the stern, were just setting out for the fishing grounds. All was hustle and activity, in strange contrast with the quiet lake and the majestic calm of the mountains.

In a few minutes Big Jim returned with some sandwiches, which they promptly disposed of while they waited for the approaching launch. It was now near enough for Walter to make out the blue pennant with the magic words "Woodcraft Camp" fluttering at the bow, and a moment later there came a joyous hail of "Oh, you Jim!" from the figure in the bow, followed by a wild waving of a small megaphone.

"Oh, you Bob!" bellowed the big guide, swinging his hat.

The launch drew in rapidly and was deftly laid alongside. From it sprang two young fellows of seventeen or eighteen, in olive khaki trousers, flannel shirts and soft-brimmed hats, who straightway fell upon Walter's companion and pounded and thumped him and shook both hands at once, and were pounded and thumped in return.

When their somewhat noisy demonstration

was over the one whom Jim had called Bob turned to Walter and held out his hand. "Guess your name is Upton, isn't it?" he inquired with a pleasant smile. "My name is Seaforth, and this is Louis Woodhull, the best fellow in Woodcraft Camp. Dr. Merriam sent us down to look for you, but I see you were already in good company. The doctor was some worried for fear you might have missed connections at Upper Chain, but if he'd known that you were trailing in company with this old son of the backwoods his mind would have been easy. Jim, you great big stick of seasoned timber, it sure does a fellow good to look at you. Stow this young fellow and the duffle in the launch while I get the mail and do some errands, and we'll be off. The whole camp's a-looking for you, though they don't expect you till to-morrow. You're sure needed. Ed Mulligan is guiding over on Big Moose and won't be with us this year, but his younger brother, Tom, is taking his place, and I guess he'll make good."

Bob's errands were soon done, the supplies, duffle and mail pouch stowed away in the

launch, and her nose pointed down the lake. Bob took the wheel, while Louis ran the engine. Walter was up forward, "to be properly impressed," as Bob put it. And if that was really the object in giving him the best post of observation, its success left nothing to be desired.

With eager eyes he drank in the wonderful panorama constantly unfolding—as the launch sped swiftly over the lake. Here the lake was less than half a mile wide, then abruptly it opened up great bays which made it more than twice that width from shore to shore. How he longed to explore those bays and coves! Two big summer hotels on commanding bluffs were passed, showing but little life as yet, for the season had not fairly opened. On rocky points, or half hidden in sheltering coves, he caught glimpses of summer "camps," most of them built of logs, but in many cases little short of palatial, and the boy's lips curled with scorn at this travesty of wealth upon the simple life. Gradually the camps became fewer and farther apart until only an occasional lean-to or a tent now and then, clinging on the very edge of the forest, was evidence of man's

invasion, and Walter felt that now in truth he was entering the wilds.

From the good-natured chaff and talk of his companions he gathered that Big Jim had been chief guide at Woodcraft Camp ever since this famous school in the woods had been started, and that the two young men had been among his earliest pupils. With eager ears he drank in their talk of fish and lures, of deer, rifles and hunting lore. Occasionally, as they skirted an island or ran around a sunken reef, one or another would recall a famous catch of bass or a big laker taken there.

Of the two young men, Seaforth was the more talkative. He was dark, with sparkling black eyes and a merry, likable face, which, for all its irrepressible good-humor, had in it a strength and purpose which denoted a solid foundation of character. He was broad-shouldered, deep-chested, finely-developed, a splendid type of young American manhood.

His chum was rather slight in build, but wiry, with light hair and a rather thin, clean, serious face which gave the impression of tremendous nervous energy habitually under control. He took but little part in the

conversation, but his quiet smile at the sallies between Bob and the guide was of a peculiarly winsome sweetness. His slight reserve drew rather than repelled Walter, who instinctively felt that the friendship of Louis Woodhull was something well worth the winning.

They had now come some twelve miles down the lake, and presently Bob pointed out a long pier jutting out from the eastern shore, and beyond it, just to the left of a giant pine, a flagstaff from which Old Glory was fluttering limply in the light breeze just beginning to ripple the surface of the lake.

"There you are, Upton, your first glimpse of Woodcraft," he said. "I hope you'll——"

But what he hoped Walter never knew. A shrill "Hy-i-i-i-i! We want that tenderfoot!" cut him short, as a canoe manned by two youngsters of about Walter's own age shot out from an island the launch was just passing. Both boys were in trunks and jerseys and paddling like mad to intercept the launch. Suddenly the one in the stern caught sight of the guide. For an instant he stopped paddling, while a look of pleased surprise passed over his face, and then with a wild yell of

"Jim, oh, you Jim!" he redoubled his efforts.

Seaforth put the wheel over to port a couple of spokes. "No you don't, Billy!" he called with a grin. "This boat carries Uncle Sam's mail, and it can't stop to pick up tows."

"Aw, Louis, slow her down, won't you?" begged Billy.

Louis smiled good-naturedly; but the engine slowed down not a bit.

"Ta-ta," called Bob. "The Indian attack is foiled, Billy. I'm ashamed of you! Your paddling is abominable. Where's that new stroke that's going to win the championship? See you later."

And then it happened. One moment two boys were frantically digging up the water with their paddles and the next a canoe was floating bottom up, one boy white-faced and frightened, clinging to the bow, and the other, with a malicious grin on his freckled face, swimming at the stern.

The instant it happened Seaforth put the wheel hard over and, describing a short circle, headed for the canoe. Walter's heart had been in his mouth, but the others seemed not

a bit disturbed. Louis stopped the launch, and while the guide righted and emptied the canoe, he and Seaforth hauled the victims aboard.

"You little beggar!" growled Bob as he grabbed Billy by the slack of his jersey, "I've a mind to duck you until you howl for mercy. You did that purposely."

Billy grinned. "You didn't suppose I was going to let you land Big Jim and I not be there, did you?" he asked.

"That's all right, Billy, but this is going to be reported," broke in Louis.

"Don't, please don't, Louis," begged the culprit.

"Sorry, son, but it's got to be. We love you, Billy, and because we love you we're going to report. You addle-pated little scamp, when will you ever learn that whatever risks a man may run himself he has no right to involve others in danger? How did you know that Allen there would be able to take care of himself, plunged unexpectedly into the water? He's been in camp only three days, so what did you know of his powers of resource? No, my son, we hate to tell tales, but we've a duty to you to perform, so prepare to pay the penalty."

The launch was now once more under way with the canoe in tow. Walter was duly introduced to the penitent Billy and his victim, Harry Allen, like himself a new recruit and therefore a tenderfoot.

Several boys had gathered on the pier to size up any newcomers the launch might bring, and Walter felt himself the target for a battery of eyes. The ordeal was light, however, compared with what it would have been at nightfall or earlier in the day, for it was now nine o'clock and the boys were largely scattered in the duties and pursuits of camp life.

As the launch was made fast Billy whispered, "Here comes Dr. Merriam; isn't he a peach?"

Walter looked up with just a little feeling of awe to see the man of whom he had heard so much—a scientist, explorer, author and lecturer, honored by many scientific societies and institutions of learning both at home and abroad, and now content to bury himself in the north woods as the founder and head of the most unique school in the world—a school with a purpose which was, as he himself whimsically expressed it, "to make big men of little boys."

Woodcraft Camp was the outgrowth of years of study and observation of boy life and the needs of the tremendous army of youth annually turned loose upon the country for three months of idleness and mischief. It was, in effect, a vacation school, so cleverly masked in the guise of a camp that probably not one among the pupils, save a few of the older boys, recognized it as such. Its courses were manliness, self-reliance, physical and mental health, strength of character, simplicity of desire and love of nature. The curriculum embraced all forms of athletic sports, swimming, canoeing, fishing, shooting, forestry, the rudiments of civil engineering, woodcraft in all its branches from the pitching of a tent or building of a lean-to to the cooking of a good meal, the shooting of a rapid and the way to live off of the country in an unknown wilderness.

Botany, ornithology, the rudiments of physiology, as taught by a knowledge of first aid to the injured—all these things and more were taught, while the boys, all unconscious that they were being systematically trained and developed, thought only of the jolly good times they were having. Timid, nervous, un-

der-developed youngsters entering the camp at the beginning of the summer vacation went forth to their studies in the fall brown, hearty, well muscled and with a quiet confidence in themselves and their own abilities to do things which won immediate recognition among their fellows. And not one among them but held in the secret places of his heart as his ideal in life the man whom Walter now saw approaching with a quick, elastic step.

He was about fifty years of age, medium height, thin, but sinewy, a human dynamo of nervous energy. He was clean shaven, slightly gray at the temples, with firm, square jaw, rather large mouth, prominent nose and eyes which seemed to see all things at once yet from which a smile seemed ever ready to leap forth. It was far from a handsome face, save in the beauty of strength, but was a face to love, a face once seen never to forget.

It was now all alight with pleasure at the sight of Big Jim. The guide leaped forward to meet the doctor, and in the greeting there was plainly evident a mutual respect and liking between these men, so far apart in the social scale, yet beneath the veneer produced by

circumstance, so closely bound in a common brotherhood.

Turning from the guide the doctor held out his hand to Walter. "Upton," he said with a kindly smile, "let me welcome you as a member of Woodcraft Camp. Buxby," turning to Billy, "you show Upton the way to Wigwam No. 1 and where to stow his duffle and wash up. By the way, Buxby, you and your canoe look pretty wet. Have an accident?" Then without waiting for Billy's reply he added, "You may police camp for the remainder of the day, Buxby. Carelessness and recklessness are equally reprehensible, and neither should ever go unpunished. Upton, please report at my office in an hour. Buxby will show you where it is."

"And I never said a word; you can't fool the doctor," whispered Woodhull to the discomfited Billy, as the latter stooped to lift a package from the launch.

Billy made a wry face and then, good-naturedly shouldering Walter's duffle bag, started up the trail toward a long log cabin.

CHAPTER III

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

WOODCRAFT CAMP had originally been the headquarters for one of the largest lumbering crews operating in that section of the north woods. The location had been chosen with the same strategy a general in the field would display in selecting headquarters for the direction of important maneuvers. The site was on a broad level of ground sufficiently high to insure perfect drainage. A boiling spring furnished a perpetual supply of pure water. A logging road had been driven straight east, tapping a heavy hardwood belt on Little Knob, while branching from this road to the south another opened up the northwestern slopes of Mt. Sewell. A third, swinging to the north, brought all of the southeastern side of Old Scraggy under the dominion of the axe and peavy. Thus the operations of three crews could be directed from the one central point, and the entire cut

of this region be put into the lake with a minimum of effort. Moreover, it was a scant half mile to the outlet of the lake, so that the rafting of the logs into the swift waters of the river was a comparatively easy matter.

The magnitude of the operations and the comparative permanency of the camp called for substantial buildings, and the three log bunk houses, stables, storehouse and blacksmith's shop were splendid examples of the loggers' skill with axe and peavy. A long pier had been built into the lake, and the underbrush cut out for a considerable distance around the camp.

With the despoiling of the once noble woodlands completed the camp had been abandoned to the occasional hunter or fisherman who passed that way. The clearing had grown up to a tangle of raspberry vines, and the deserted buildings had begun to show signs of neglect and decay, when Dr. Merriam chanced to camp there. At once he saw the opportunity to put into execution his long-cherished dream of a woodcraft school camp for boys.

The property, with some five hundred acres of adjoining land, was bought, the buildings

repaired, with only such changes made as would adapt them to the needs of the proposed school, the land in the immediate vicinity cleared of underbrush, and the pier re-

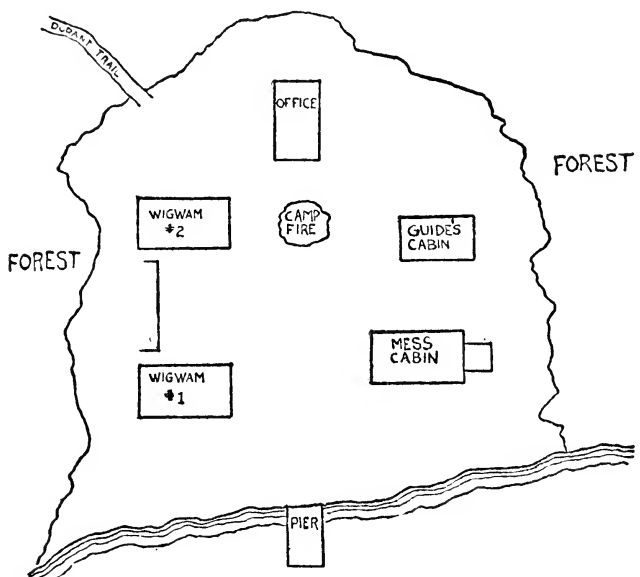


DIAGRAM OF WOODCRAFT CAMP

paired. It was Dr. Merriam's idea to make as little change in appearance and arrangement as possible, that the camp might lose nothing of the romantic charm which sur-

rounds every logging camp when seen for the first time by eager boyish eyes.

Walter, following Billy up the trail, was ushered into the first of the three large cabins. Inside it was almost as rough as the outside, yet he was at once conscious of that indescribable sense of comfort and security which the log cabin in the forest alone possesses. The low ceiling, which had originally divided the loft from the main room, had been removed to insure a better circulation of air. In a double tier down the two sides were built plain box bunks, each containing a tick filled with straw. Sheets, gray blanket and a thin pillow, filled with aromatic fir balsam, completed the equipment. Each bunk was numbered and a corresponding number appeared on the bedding in each. In the rear of the room was a huge fireplace capable of taking in six foot logs, and on either side a tier of lockers numbered to correspond with the bunks.

Tossing Walter's duffle onto the nearest bunk, Billy suggested that he open up for his soap, towel, brush and comb. Supplied with these necessary adjuncts to the toilet he meekly fol-

lowed Billy out to a long, low shed located to the rear and midway between the cabin he had just left and another, which was of the same size and, as he later discovered, of precisely the same interior arrangement.

A broad shelf ran the entire length of this shed. On this stood three pails of water, each with a dipper hanging above it, while beneath the shelf hung a row of graniteware wash-basins. Big galvanized nails were driven at convenient points for the towels and the folding mirrors which were a part of every boy's equipment. It was primitive, very primitive, but quite in accord with Dr. Merriam's idea, and Walter had to admit that it served his purpose admirably.

While Walter made himself presentable, Billy plied him with questions. When he got through Walter felt that he had been pumped dry, and that the garrulous Billy knew his life history. Finally he ventured a few questions himself.

"Is this your first year?" he inquired.

"Me? My first year? Say, do I look like a tenderfoot?" demanded the indignant Billy. "Say, you are green. Never was off of Broad-

way before, was you? No, sir, this is my third year. Say, if you want to learn woodcraft, just you trot with me a while."

"Said woodcraft consisting at the present moment in policing camp," broke in a quiet voice just behind them. "Probably Upton had rather be excused."

Both boys turned to find Louis Woodhull, who, walking with the noiseless step of the forest ranger, had come upon them unawares.

"There's a lot of chips around the wood-pile, Billy, and cook wants them right now, so trot along, son," he continued.

"Doctor told me to look out for Upton," protested Billy.

"Upton is quite equal to taking care of himself, from all I hear," said Louis drily. "Wood-pile's waiting for a good, strong, able-bodied forester who knows woodcraft, one of the first essentials of which is knowledge of how to swing an axe. Insubordination ——"

But Billy, with a grimace, had already started for the chip basket.

Louis laughed. "Billy is one of the best hearted boys in camp, but he's a reckless little beggar, and he does hate work. Look out he

doesn't lead you into mischief, Upton. By the way, Big Jim tells me that you've already started in to conquer the wilderness, and have laid one of the savages low. Where did you learn to use your fists?"

"My father taught me how to protect myself almost as soon as I could walk, and then I took boxing lessons at the gym. That was nothing this morning; I couldn't have licked him if he'd known what I know," replied Walter modestly.

"My boy," said the older lad earnestly, "right there lies the difference between success and failure—knowledge—the know how—the know why—the know when. Knowledge is power. It is better than bull strength. You knew how to make the most of what muscle you have got, and you won. You'll find that's the answer all through life. The man with knowledge and the power to apply it is top of the heap every time. Take these big woods here—how long do you suppose a greenhorn from the city dropped in the middle of 'em alone, with nothing but gun and blanket, would live? But take a fellow like Big Jim, with his knowledge of the wilderness and wil-

derness ways, and he'd hit the nearest settlement in three days and live like a lord all the way. Now, if you're ready I'll show you the way to the office. By the way, I'm going to ask Dr. Merriam to put you in my tribe; I like your style."

The "office" was a small detached cabin which had formerly been the headquarters of the logging camp boss. It was divided into two rooms by means of burlap curtains. In the front room was a desk, a plain deal table, three rustic chairs and book shelves occupying two-thirds of the wall space. The head of a magnificent ten-point buck looked down from above the fireplace. Over the books were mounted specimens of salmon, trout, bass and muskelonge. Mounted specimens of rare birds, a case of butterflies wholly unlike any Walter had ever seen, and which he suspected were from distant lands, specimen stones and minerals from the surrounding mountains, added to the fascination of the room. Before the fireplace lay the skin of a huge bear, and two tanned deer hides were spread on the floor. In one corner stood a collection of guns, rifles, paddles, fishing-rods and landing

nets which caught the boy's eager eyes the instant he entered.

Through the parted curtains he had a glimpse of the same primitive sleeping arrangement, namely a box bunk, that he had found in the big cabin where he had left his duffle. Could he have peeped farther within he would have found a neat single iron bedstead with a hair mattress and snowy counterpane, a dainty white bureau, low, comfortable rocking-chair, sewing-machine and other evidences of feminine comfort, for, though Dr. Merriam religiously insisted on having for himself nothing more luxurious than he gave his "boys," the comfort of Mrs. Merriam—she was "Mother" Merriam to the whole camp in the affections of the boys—was another matter, and no pains were spared to make things pleasant and comfortable for her. In fact, not only the boys, but the guides and others attached to the camp vied with each other in showing her little attentions and waiting upon her.

As Walter and Louis entered "Mother" Merriam came forward at once to greet the newcomer, and while Louis talked with the

doctor for a few minutes this quiet, sweet-faced, tactful little woman put the newcomer so at his ease that when Louis finally bade his superior good-morning and went out, Walter turned to meet the head of the camp wholly free from the awe with which he had entered the door not five minutes before.

"Upton," said the doctor, "Woodhull has just requested that you be assigned to his 'tribe,' an honor which you do not appreciate now, but which you will later. The camp is divided into four patrols or 'tribes,' each under the leadership and direction of one of our oldest and most trustworthy boys, known as 'chiefs.' Woodhull is chief of the Delawares, and Seaforth, whom you met with the launch, is chief of the Algonquins, the two tribes occupying the big cabin known as Wigwam No. 1, to which Buxby showed you on your arrival. Wigwam No. 2 is occupied by the Senecas and Hurons, under Chiefs Avery and Robertson. The rules of the camp are few and simple and every boy is put on his honor and is trusted to live up to them. Reveille is sounded at five o'clock every morning, except Sunday, when it is an hour

later. At five-thirty on week-days and six-thirty on Sunday mess is served to two of the tribes and half an hour later to the other two, the wigwams alternating in the order of service.

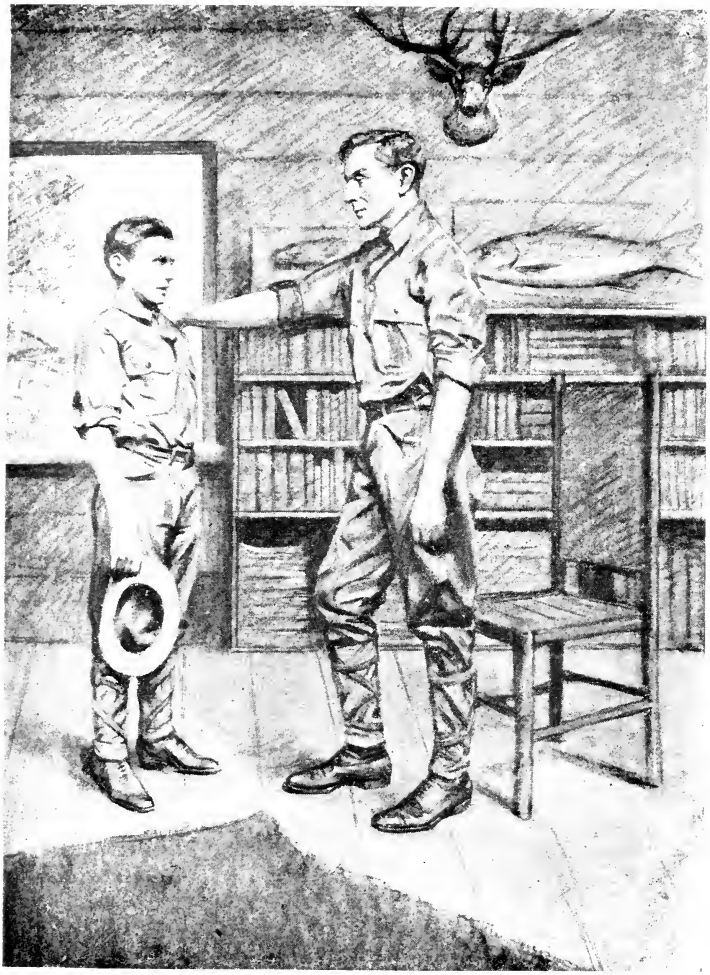
"A detail from each wigwam is assigned to police the camp, that is, clear up all rubbish and keep the camp in order, wash dishes and chop fire-wood. Noon mess is served from twelve to one o'clock and evening mess from five-thirty to six-thirty. At nine o'clock 'taps' is sounded, which means 'lights out' and every boy in bed.

"Each boy is expected to look after the making up of his own bed. There are certain defined limits on shore and on the lake beyond which no boy may go without a permit from his chief, sanctioned by me.

"The building of fires at any time or place is strictly prohibited save when accompanied by a guide or chief. Smoking is not allowed. Violation of either of these two rules is sufficient cause for expulsion from camp. Boys who cannot swim are not allowed in the boats or canoes unless accompanied by an older competent person, until they have learned to

care for themselves. The carrying or use of firearms is forbidden except at the rifle range, where instruction is given daily by one of the guides. From time to time there will be 'special duty' squads, such as the surveying squad, forestry squad, logging squad, and others on which boys are expected to serve willingly, and in the performance of these duties they will be taught many of the essentials of woodcraft.

"You will report this afternoon to Mr. Medcraft, our physical instructor, for examination, and will be expected to follow his recommendations for daily exercise. Big Jim has told me of your encounter at Upper Chain. My boy, I rejoice in the manliness and courage, in the sense of fair play, which led to your defense of the weak. Of all men the bully is most contemptible. No bullies are allowed in this camp, and, Upton, no fighting, unless all other means of settling a quarrel prove futile. Then it is fought out with gloves in the presence of the whole camp and with an unbiased referee. It has happened but once; I hope it will not happen again. I mention this now, for I fear that you will



"TELL HIM YOU ARE TO BE A DELAWARE"

find that you have established a reputation as a fighter, and such a reputation often leads one into difficulties which otherwise might be avoided.

"We are glad to have you as a member of Woodcraft Camp, and I hope we shall make a first-class scout and a thorough sportsman and woodsman of you. I will not add 'gentleman,' for we feel that every boy is that when he comes to us. If you are interested in any special branch of nature study come and consult me freely that I may aid you in its pursuit.

"Now you may report to Chief Woodhull, and tell him you are to be a Delaware. He will inform you as to the minor rules of the camp and our methods of learning the most from this close communion and association with nature. We want you to go home in the fall feeling that you have had the best time a red-blooded boy could have, and that the summer has been profitable as well."

With a pleasant smile the doctor shook hands warmly once more and Walter started for the wigwam, secretly elated that he was to be under Woodhull, and that he was to be

a Delaware, the tribe of Uncas and Chingachgook. He found Woodhull waiting for him. The chief greeted him pleasantly.

"So the big chief (that's what we call the doctor) has made a Delaware of you? I'm glad of that."

"So am I," responded Walter.

"Now the first thing," the other continued, "is to get acquainted with the wigwam and stow away your duffle. The Delawares have the east side, and the Algonquins the west. Your number is the skiddoo number, twenty-three, for bunk and locker, and I hope you'll make it a lucky number for the tribe. Stow your duffle in your locker, and I'll show you around the camp and make you acquainted with some of the boys. By the way, Upton, do you go in for athletics, besides boxing?"

Walter admitted that he ran a little, being best at the mile, was fairly good at the running broad jump, had once won a boy's canoe race, and had practiced a lot at a short range target with a small rifle.

His chief received the information with manifest pleasure. "You see," he explained, "we have a big field day in August, and there

is a lot of rivalry between the tribes, and especially between the two wigwams. A mounted deer's head is offered this year to the wigwam scoring the greatest number of points in woodcraft during the summer and in the field day sports, and we want it over our fireplace. The biggest fish caught each day counts five points and the biggest for the week fifteen points; the best photograph of wild animals or birds made during the summer counts twenty-five points; fifteen points each are scored for the rarest botanical specimen, best mineral specimen, largest number of birds positively identified, best collection of insects and largest number of trees identified. Any exceptional feat of woodcraft scores to the benefit of the wigwam. The championship banner goes to the tribe winning the largest number of points in the successful wigwam. The Hurons won it last year, but, son, the Delawares have got to get it this year. Then there are individual prizes well worth mentioning. We shall expect you to miss no opportunity to score for the honor of the tribe and wigwam. Our wigwam leads now, but the Algonquins have twenty points the best of the Delawares. It's up to you to

do your prettiest to help us get their scalps. By the way, don't be surprised if things are made some interesting for you to-night. Whatever happens, keep your nerve and don't show the white feather."

Beyond this mysterious hint Woodhull would vouchsafe no information, and Walter could only guess at what might be in store for him.

The tour of the camp included the big mess cabin, with the cook house in the rear, where they had a glimpse of Billy and the chip pile, and the cabin of the three guides, where they found Big Jim very much at home, the other two being out with fishing parties, and where Walter was introduced to Mr. Medcraft, the physical director, and to Mr. Burnham, a young Y. M. C. A. man who was Dr. Merriam's assistant. These shared the cabin with the guides. They then went down to inspect the boats and canoes. Several fishing parties were just coming in, and Walter was introduced to some of his fellow tribesmen, as well as to members of the other tribes.

As they turned back to the wigwam the bugle sounded for noon mess, and boys ap-

peared as if by magic from every direction in a mad rush for the wash-house. Presently Walter found himself seated at a long table in the mess room, an agate-ware plate and cup before him, and an abundant supply of plain but well cooked food, in which deliciously browned trout were evidence of the practical lessons taught at Woodcraft Camp.

CHAPTER IV

THE INITIATION

Mess over, Woodhull and Seaforth took their stand at either side of the door, and Walter noted that as each boy passed out he saluted the two chiefs with the Scout's salute, and was saluted in return. It was a point of etiquette which he learned was never omitted, and which did much to maintain discipline and to instil the principles of respect for superior officers. Once outside the mess room Walter was free to inspect the camp in detail and at his leisure for, it being his first day, he was not assigned to any of the duty squads.

There were fifty-two boys in camp, including the four leaders, or chiefs, and they were from all quarters, two being from as far west as Chicago. They represented all classes in the social scale. A few were from homes of extreme wealth and one, according to Billy, was a Boston newsboy in whom the doctor

took a personal interest. But in accordance with Scout ideals all were on equal footing in the camp, and the most democratic spirit prevailed. Achievement in scoutcraft alone furnished a basis for distinction.

The camp had been established three years before the Boy Scouts of America came into existence, but Dr. Merriam had been quick to perceive the value of the new movement, the principles of which are, in fact, the very ones he had been seeking to inculcate in his unique school. This year the camp had been placed under Scout regulations, and it was the doctor's desire to send every one of his boys home at the end of the summer as qualified Scouts of the first class, fitted to take the leadership of home patrols.

Approaching from behind the wood-pile, where Buxby's assignment to duty was keeping him busy, Walter heard his own name and paused, uncertain whether to go on or not. Billy was regaling the cook with an account of Walter's exploit of the morning as he had wormed it out of Big Jim.

"Pretty spry with his fists, they say," concluded the talkative Billy. Then he added

as an afterthought, "Bet they'll get his goat to-night, though."

Walter waited to hear no more. He had not been wholly unconscious of the sly looks and mysterious winks passed between some of the boys he had met, and, though he did not allow it to show outwardly, he was inwardly not a little perturbed by the thought of the initiatory ordeal he felt sure he must undergo. Chief Woodhull's hint, together with the frequent exchange of meaning glances which he had intercepted, could mean but one thing—that his nerve and courage were to be put to some strange and crucial test.

Therefore it was with some trepidation that with the sounding of taps that night Walter sought his bunk and turned in. In five minutes lights were out, and apparently the camp had settled down for the night. Walter lay listening in suspense for some sound which would indicate that secret designs concerning himself were afoot, but nothing but the regular breathing of twenty-five healthy, tired boys rewarded his vigilance. It had been a long, strenuous day, with little rest the night before, and in spite of himself he soon fell asleep.

He was awakened by the sudden removal of his blanket. Despite his struggles he was bound and gagged. Then his arms were loosed enough for his flannel shirt to be slipped on. His trousers and shoes followed, and then he was rolled in his blanket, picked up bodily and carried forth into the night. In absolute silence his captors bore him along what appeared to be a rough, little used trail. Occasionally a dew-damp twig brushed his face. Through the tangle of interlacing branches overhead he caught glimpses of the stars. The number of his captors he had no means of knowing. He was carried by relays, and though there were frequent changes he could not tell whether each time a new team of bearers took him or two teams alternated.

Once his bearers stumbled and nearly dropped him. Once they seemed to lose the trail, stopping to hold a whispered consultation of which the victim could catch only a word here and there. After what seemed like an interminable length of time Walter heard in the distance the tremolo of a screech-owl, answered by a similar call close at hand. A few minutes later they emerged in an opening.

"Are the canoes ready?" asked a subdued but sepulchral voice.

"They are, chief," was the guarded reply.

"Then let them be manned," was the order.

Walter was carefully placed in a canoe amidship. He felt it gently shoved off, and then it floated idly while, to judge by the sounds, the other canoes were hastily put in the water. Presently, at a low command from the rear of his own craft, there was the dip of many paddles and he felt the light craft shoot forward.

Flat on his back, he could see little but the star-sprinkled heavens. It seemed to him that never had he seen the stars so bright or apparently so near. By straining up and forward he caught the shadowy outline of the bow man's back, but the second time he tried it he was warned to desist. Out of the tail of his left eye he sometimes caught the arm and paddle of the stern man on the forward reach. But thus far there had been nothing to give him the slightest idea whether he was in the hands of members of his own tribe or a captive of one of the rival tribes.

Swiftly, silently, save for the light splash of paddles and the gurgling ripple at the bow, the canoe sped on. Never will Walter forget the spell of that mysterious night ride on that lonely lake in the heart of the great north woods. His gag had been removed and, but for inability to move hand or foot, he was not uncomfortable. All the witchery of night in the forest was enhanced an hundredfold by the mystery of his abduction and the unknown trials awaiting him.

A mighty chorus of frogs denoted low, marshy land somewhere in the vicinity. Strange voices of furtive wild things floated across from the shore. Once a heavy splash close to the canoe set his heart to thumping fiercely until he rightly surmised that it was made by a startled muskrat, surprised at his nocturnal feast of mussels. Again, as they slipped through the heavy shadows close along shore, there was a crash in the underbrush which might or might not have been a deer. It was weird, uncanny, trying in the extreme, yet sending little electric thrills of fascination through the nerves of the city boy.

How long the journey lasted Walter could

not tell, but he judged that it was at least half an hour before there suddenly broke out ahead a cry, so human yet so wild, that he felt the very roots of his hair crawl. Once more it rang over the lake, a high-pitched, maniacal laugh that rolled across the water and was flung back in crazy echoes from the shores. In a flash it came to Walter that this must be the cry of the loon, the Great Northern Diver, of which he had often read. This time it was answered from the rear. A few minutes later the canoe grated on the shore. Walter was lifted out, his eyes bandaged, the bonds removed from his legs and, with a captor on either side, he was led for some distance along what seemed like an old corduroy logging road.

On signal from the leader a halt was made and the bandage was removed from the captive's eyes. Curiously he glanced about, but in the faint light could make out little. Apparently they were in the middle of a small opening in the forest. On all sides a seemingly unbroken wall of blackness, the forest, hemmed them in. In a half circle before him squatted some two dozen blanketed forms.

One of these now arose and stepped forward.

He was tall and rather slender. In the uncertain light his features appeared to be those of an Indian. A single feather in his scalp lock was silhouetted against the sky. A blanket was loosely but gracefully draped about his figure. Standing in front of the captive he drew himself up proudly to his full height and, leveling a long bare arm at the prisoner, addressed him in a deep guttural.

"Paleface, dweller in wigwams of brick and stone, it is made known to us that your heart turns from the settlements to the heart of the great forest, and that you desire to become a child of the Lenape, whose totem is the tortoise, to be adopted by the Delawares, the tribe of Uncas and Chingachgook; that you long to follow the trail of the red deer and to spread your blanket beside the sweet waters; to read the message of the blowing wind, and interpret aright the meaning of every fallen leaf.

"You have come among us, paleface, not unheralded. Our ears have been filled with a tale of valor. It has warmed the hearts of the Delawares and their brothers, the Algonquins. Our young men have had their ears to the

ground; they have followed your trail, and they yearn to make a place for you at their council fire. But, lest the tales to which they have listened prove to be but the chirping of a singing bird, it has been decided in secret council that you must undergo the test of the spirits.

"Alone in the wigwam of the spirits, where, it is said, on the fifth night in every month the spirit of a departed brave, stricken in the prime of his manhood, comes seeking the red hand of his slayer,—here alone you shall keep watch through the black hours of the night. Thus shall we know if your heart be indeed the heart of the Lenape; if you are of the stuff of which Delaware warriors are made; if our ears have heard truly or if they have indeed been filled with the foolish chatter of a Whisky Jack (Canada jay).

"If you meet this trial as a warrior should, making neither sign nor sound, whate'er befall, then will the Delawares receive you with open arms, no longer a paleface, but a true son of the Tortoise, a blood brother, for whom a place in the council chamber is even now ready."

Turning to the shadowy group squatting in silence he threw out both arms dramatically.

"Sons of the Lenape, do I speak truly?" he demanded.

A chorus of guttural grunts signified assent. Turning once more to the captive the speaker asked:

"Paleface, are you prepared to stand the test?"

As the harangue had proceeded Walter recalled that during the afternoon he had heard vague references to a haunted cabin across the lake. Now the conviction was forced upon him that this was the place in which he was to be left to spend the night alone. In spite of himself a shiver of something very like fear swept over him, for the mystery of the night was upon him. But he had firmly resolved not to show the white feather. Then again he was possessed of a large bump of sound common sense, and he felt certain that if, when left alone, he gave way to fear, sharp eyes and ears would be within range to note and gloat over it. In fact he shrewdly suspected that spies would be watching him, and

that his solitude would be more apparent than real. He therefore replied:

"I am ready."

Thereupon the leader gave some brief directions to the band, of whom all but two trailed off in single file and disappeared in the blackness of the forest. Presently he heard the faint clatter of paddles carelessly dropped in canoes, and surmised that his late companions were embarking for camp. A few minutes later the hoot of a horned owl came from the direction they had taken. This seemed to be a signal for which his guard had been waiting. Once more the bandage was placed over his eyes, and he was led for some distance along an old tote road.

At length a halt was called. His legs were bound and he was picked up and carried a short distance. Although he could see nothing he was aware by the change of air that they had entered a building. He suspected that this was the haunted cabin. He was deposited on a rough board floor with what appeared to be a roll of old burlap beneath his head. He was told that his hands and feet would be freed of their bonds, but he was put

upon his honor not to remove the bandage from his eyes for half an hour.

"Keep your nerve, son, and don't sit up suddenly," was whispered in his ear.

He could not be sure, but he had a feeling that the speaker was Woodhull, and to himself he renewed his vow that, come what might, he would not show the white feather. He heard his captors silently withdraw and then all was silent.

Cautiously he felt around him. Sticks and bits of bark littered the floor. Rough hewn logs shut him in on one side, but on the other as far as he could reach was open space. Feeling above he found that there was not room to sit upright, and he thanked his unknown friend for that last timely warning.

The silence grew oppressive. It was broken by a light thump on the roof, followed by the rasp of swift little claws. "Squirrels," thought Walter, after the first startled jump. Gradually he became aware of a feeling that he was not the only tenant of the cabin. Once he heard something that sounded very like a long drawn sigh. He held his breath and listened, but there was not another sound.

What were those tales he had heard of the cabin being haunted? He tried to recall them. How far from the camp was he? Would they come for him in the morning or would he have to find his way in alone?

In spite of his strange surroundings and lively imagination Walter found difficulty in keeping awake. Outraged nature was asserting herself. There had been little sleep for more than twenty-four hours, and now even the uncertainty of his position could keep him awake no longer. In fact he had not even removed the bandage from his eyes when he fell sound asleep.

He was awakened by having this suddenly snatched off. For a few minutes he blinked stupidly while a mighty shout from the entire wigwam greeted him:

"Oh, warrior, tried and true,
We hereby welcome you!
We like your nerve!
We like your sand!
A place you've won
Within our band.
You've won your feather fair—
You are a DEL-A-WARE!"

Then Walter was hauled forth and shaken

hands with and thumped and pounded on the back by a whooping, laughing crew of boys in all stages of undress. It was broad daylight and, to his amazement, Walter found he was not in the haunted cabin but in his own wigwam, where he had spent the night on the floor underneath his own bunk. The boys, noting the expression of his face, shouted afresh and mercilessly guyed him till presently, realizing how completely he had been duped, he wisely joined in the laugh at his own expense.

Reveille had sounded. Buxby joined him at the wash bench, and on the way to mess explained how the initiation was worked. When he had been placed in the canoe they had simply paddled around near camp for half an hour. He had then been led over an old trail to an opening near, but out of sight of the camp, and there Woodhull, in the character of the Indian chief, had delivered the harangue. At its conclusion all but the guard had gone to the wigwam and at once turned in, one of them first slipping down to the lake and rattling the paddles, afterward giving the owl signal. The guard had then led him back to the wigwam and put him under his own bunk,

where the floor had been strewn with chips and bark to fool him when he felt around, as they had foreseen he would.

"You're all right, Upton, and say, wasn't Louis a lulu?" concluded the garrulous Billy.

At mess Walter realized that he had "made good," and was already accepted as one of themselves by the merry crew of sun-browned youngsters amongst whom he had come a total stranger less than twenty-four hours before. Most of all he prized Woodhull's quiet "Good boy," as he saluted him at the door.

CHAPTER V

THE RECALL

"Oh, you Delaware!"

"Come tell us that tale of the singing bird!"

"Looks pale; must have seen a haunt!"

"Got your goat with you?"

"Come join the young men at their council fire!"

Walter grinned at the good-natured chaff of a group of boys squatting in front of a shelter tent pitched on the shore of the lake.

"Where's the fire?" he asked.

"What!" cried Tug Benson. "Is he coming among us with the eyes of a paleface?" He spread his hands above the ashes of a long dead fire as if warming them. "And here," he added in an injured tone, "we've been sitting for an hour roasting that loon he heard last night, that he might feast with us. Now he doesn't even see the fire!" He gave an exaggerated sniff. "He's done to a turn."

"Which?" asked Billy Buxby innocently. "Walt or the loon?"

"Both," said Spud Ely with conviction. "Say, Upton, tell us about that scrap."

"Nothing to tell," replied Walter.

"Modest, though mighty, as becomes a son of the Tortoise," commented Tug. "Say, Walt, did he have light curly hair and a front tooth missing?"

"Now you mention it, I believe he did," replied Walter.

"Pat Malone!" exclaimed Tug triumphantly. "Sure thing. Say, fellows, Pat's been hanging 'round camp for the last three or four days; what do you suppose he's after?"

"Looking for a chance to swipe something," said Billy.

"Aw stow it, Billy! Pat's tough all right, but that doesn't make him a thief," said Chip Harley.

"I saw Pat talking with Hal Harrison up on the Old Scraggy trail just at dusk the other night," broke in Ned Peasely. "They seemed mighty 'fraid of being seen. Wonder what's up?"

"Oh, probably Hal's trying to impress on the natives a sense of his own importance and the power of the almighty dollar," said Spud.

"Cut it out, Spud," advised Tug. "Hal's all right. Some day he'll forget he's the son of a millionaire. He's got good stuff in him."

"Sure thing," said Chip. "Say, did you know that he brought in another record fish this morning? Six-pound small-mouth bass. That's what gets my goat. Here he is, a tenderfoot, and yet he's putting it all over the fellows that have been here two or three years. He's rolling up points for the Senecas to beat the band. Say, I'll bet that Pat Malone has put him next to some secret fishing ground or new bait or something."

"Speaking of angels ——" said Billy.

Walter looked up with the others to see a boy of perhaps fifteen passing on the trail up from the lake. He wore the regulation camp dress, but there was something in his bearing, a suggestion of superiority, a hint of condescension in his curt nod to the group around the tent, that gave Walter the feeling that he considered himself a little above his companions. Yet, withal, there was something likable in his face, despite a rather weak mouth and the shifty glance of his eyes. Instinctively Walter felt that Tug was right, and that beneath

the supercilious veneer there was the stuff of which men are made, submerged now by self-indulgence and the misfortune of being born with a silver spoon in his mouth, as Tug expressed it.

"Hear you've put another over on us. Say, Hal, put us wise to that private preserve of yours, will you?" called the irrepressible Billy.

"Do a little scouting and find one for yourself," retorted Hal, passing on up the trail.

"I have it! We will do a little scouting. We'll trail him 'til we find out where he gets those big fish. What do you say, fellows?"

"That we'll do nothing of the kind."

The words were spoken quietly, but with a note of authority and finality that admitted of no contradiction. The boys turned to find Woodhull in their midst. Unseen he had come up just in time to hear Billy's last words. They all saluted the chief, and then Billy, who never was known to let the chance for an argument pass, took up the subject again.

"Why not, Louis?" he demanded. "I

thought it was a Scout's duty to always keep on the trail of an enemy."

"Meaning whom?" asked Woodhull.

"Why, Harrison, of course. Isn't he a Seneca, and aren't the Senecas the enemies of the Delawares?"

"Wrong again, Billy," responded the chief. "The Senecas are rivals, not enemies of the Delawares, and we are going to beat 'em to it in fair and open contest—if we can. But they are brother Scouts, members of Woodcraft Camp as we are. Just pin that in your hat. Of all contemptible beings the most contemptible is a spy, save in actual warfare. No, my son, if Hal has been smart enough to beat us all at locating the hiding-places of big fish he is entitled to the honors. Put your powers as a Scout to work and find the fish for yourself, my son; but no spying on fellow Scouts.

"Tug, suppose you take Upton out to the swimming raft and try him out. You know the Hurons drew a prize in Hampton, who came in last week. Billy, I've got a bit of surveying to do on the Little Knob trail, and I need a rodman. Are you on?"

"You bet! you know I'd follow you to the North Pole, Louis," replied Billy, rising with alacrity.

Tug and Walter started for their tights, while the others continued to sprawl lazily around the tent.

"The chief's right," said Spud meditatively. "It wouldn't be a square deal to spy on Hal. Just the same I'd like to know where he gets those fish. You don't suppose ——" He broke off abruptly.

"You don't suppose what?" asked Chip.

"Oh, nothin'!"

"Come, Spud, out with it! What don't you suppose?"

Spud clasped his hands about his knees and gazed thoughtfully into the fireplace.

"What does Hal do with all his spending money?" he demanded abruptly.

Chip looked up, startled. "You don't mean, Spud, that you think for a minute he ——"

"No, I don't," Spud broke in. "I don't believe there's a fellow in camp low down mean enough to try to win points with things he'd bought. But why couldn't he

have hired some one to put him next—guide for him?"

The boys considered this in silence for a few minutes.

"Aw, forget it, Spud," advised Chip. "Hal wouldn't do that. He's got us going, and we're sore, that's all. Let's take a canoe and try for that big laker you lost the other day."

"I'm with you," replied Spud promptly. "Bet he don't get away from me again!"

Meanwhile Walter and Tug had paddled out to the raft, where boys from both wigwams were enjoying a morning swim. Walter was a fair swimmer, but he soon found that Tug quite outclassed him. As a matter of fact Tug was the star swimmer of the tribe, and in the water was as much at home as a fish. He watched Walter critically for a few minutes.

"You'll do best at long distance," he decided. "We'll put you in for the quarter mile. You're rotten on the crawl, and the crawl's the only thing for the hundred yards. You've got something to learn on that overhand, too. You fight the water too much.

You don't get in your full power, and when you try to hit it up you waste your strength. Here, let me show you!"

With a clean-cut dive Tug left the raft, and Walter watched with admiration, not unmixed with envy, the powerful yet easy overhand strokes that sent the swimmer through the water without apparent exertion, yet at a speed that made his own best efforts seem hopeless. Tug regained the raft, and Walter noted that he was breathing as easily as if he had not been in the water at all.

"Say, Tug, will you coach me?" he asked eagerly.

"Surest thing you ever knew! That's what I'm here for," was Tug's hearty reply. "But you've got to keep at it every day. No soldiering, and, kid, no getting mad when I throw the hooks into you! If we can get even a third in the quarter we'll pretty near break even with the Hurons. The Algonquins have only one man we're really afraid of, and the Senecas don't cut much ice in the water, but are all to the good on it."

"Paddling?" asked Walter.

"Yep," replied Tug. "They've got a great

tandem team, and a four I'm afraid we can't touch at all. And then you know they've got a long lead on points for fish, thanks to Harrison. By Jove, I should like to know where he gets those big fellows, and what bait he uses. He's mum as an oyster."

Just as they stepped into the canoe to paddle back to camp the notes of a bugle rang clear and full across the water.

"Hello!" exclaimed Tug, pausing to look over the camp. "That's the 'recall.' Wonder what's up. That means everybody report at once. Hit her up, kid!"

As soon as the canoe touched shore the boys sprang out and turned it bottom up on the beach. As they hurried up to headquarters boys were pouring in from all directions, on every face a look of wondering curiosity. The recall was sounded only in case of an emergency.

When the last straggler within sound of the bugle had hurried in, Dr. Merriam stepped from the office. His face was very grave as he studied the expectant faces turned toward him. An instant hush fell over the waiting boys.

"Scouts of Woodcraft Camp," began the

doctor slowly, and it seemed as if he measured each word as he spoke, "I have had the recall sounded because of a discovery made an hour since—a discovery unprecedented in the annals of Woodcraft Camp. It is that there is or has been a thief in our midst." He paused for an instant while his keen eyes scanned the startled faces before him. Then with one of his rarely beautiful smiles he added, "But I do not believe that any member of this camp is guilty."

Instantaneous relief rippled over the faces before him and the doctor, noting it, smiled again. Then once more his face grew grave and stern, as he continued:

"For some days little things have been missed around headquarters. That they were stolen we have not been willing to believe, preferring to think that they had been mislaid. But this morning occurred a loss which admits of no doubt that there has been a thief in camp. You all remember the little gold clasp pin in the shape of a Maltese cross, set with three small diamonds, which Mrs. Merriam always wears at her throat?"

The boys nodded. They would have been

poor Scouts indeed had they not noticed the one bit of jewelry which "Mother" Merriam allowed herself in camp.

"This morning Mrs. Merriam laid the pin on the sill of the north window of her room. Five minutes later she went to get it, but it was not there. Nor was it on the ground outside or on the floor inside. The actual value is not great but, because of sentimental associations, the value is not to be computed in dollars and cents. To Mrs. Merriam that little pin is priceless. I have called you together to tell you of this loss, believing that there is not one among you but will gladly give of his time and best endeavor to discover the thief and secure if possible the return of Mrs. Merriam's valued keepsake. I ask each one of you to report to me privately any suspicious circumstances he may be aware of or may discover. That is all."

The boys at once broke into excited groups. That there could be a thief among them was inconceivable. Still, there had been few strangers in camp, two or three guides and a few lumber-jacks passing through, and all of these above suspicion.

Chip Harley joined Walter and Tug, and the three walked on in silence. It was broken by Chip.

"Say, fellows," said he, "you remember what was said about Pat Malone this morning? Well, he was in camp just afterward."

"How do you know?" asked Tug.

"Saw him," said Chip. "He came in while you fellows were swimming. Left a message for Tom Mulligan. When he left he took the trail up past headquarters."

Tug and Walter considered this information soberly.

"Looks bad," said Tug. "Shall you report to the big chief?"

"I don't know," replied Chip. "It's suspicious, any way you look at it."

"Don't do it yet," said Walter. "You haven't got any real evidence, you know. And let's not say anything about it to the other fellows. It does look mighty suspicious, but I don't believe that a fellow who would take a licking and then get up and shake hands the way Pat did with me would steal. Let's do a little scouting before we say

anything. What's the matter with us three working together on this thing?"

"Good!" agreed Tug. "Each night we'll get together and report all clues discovered. Gee, but I'd like to find that pin for Mother Merriam!"

"You bet!" said Walter. "And I'd like to clear Pat, too," he added to himself.

The three shook hands on the compact, and separated to look for clues. True to their agreement, they said nothing about Pat. But others had seen the sawmill boy in camp, and by night there was a pretty general conviction that Pat was the thief, so easy is it for mere suspicion to pose as truth. A few of the more hot-headed were for rounding Pat up the next day and forcing him to confess, but wiser council prevailed, and it was agreed that Pat should be left alone until real evidence against him was produced. After evening mess Chip, Walter and Tug met in a quiet corner to report.

"Well?" said Tug.

"Footprints," said Chip sententiously. "Found 'em leaving the regular trail just north of the office, and pointing toward

Mother Merriam's window. Just about Pat's size, they were. Prints of the hobnails in the right showed clearly, and three are missing on the ball. Sprinkled some dirt over the tracks so that no one else would find them. What did you find, Tug?"

"Nothin', except that Pat went from here straight up to the Durant lumber camp," replied Tug.

"And you, Walt?"

"Nothing but this," said Walter, drawing the tail feather of a crow from his pocket. "Found it caught in the window screen."

"Worse and more of it," growled Tug. "Pat usually has a feather sticking in that old hat of his. Don't you remember?"

"Yep," responded Chip.

They sat in silence for a while, considering the evidence.

"Looks bad, doesn't it?" said Chip gloomily.

"It sure does," assented Walter, "but footprints and a feather are mighty small things on which to brand a fellow a thief. Let's wait till we get something else before we say anything."

"Right-oh!" responded Tug, rising to stretch. "I'm going to turn in. Nine o'clock sharp at the raft to-morrow, Walt."

"Sure!" replied Walter.

Then, with the sounding of "taps" the boys sought their bunks.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPECTER IN CAMP

A SHADOW lay over Woodcraft Camp. The routine of daily life went on as before, but there was something lacking. The fun-making was not spontaneous. There was no enthusiasm in work or play. The old time jollying ceased. The rivalry between the tribes seemed falling into hopeless apathy. Even Spud Ely's success in temporarily wresting the fishing honors from Hal Harrison and the Senecas by landing a twelve-pound lake trout served to awaken no more than a passing interest.

Suspicion, the grimmest of all specters, strode back and forth through the camp. Whenever a group of boys came together it peered over their shoulders and with bony fingers choked back laughter and song and strangled the old freedom of speech. It sat at mess, and the chill of its presence was felt in the wigwams at night. Who had stolen

Mother Merriam's pin? Who? Who? Could it be that the thief was really one of their number?

For more than a week nothing was seen of Pat Malone. To many, hasty of judgment, eager to rid themselves of the specter, this was construed as evidence of guilt. But still the specter would not down. The strain was telling not only on the spirits but on the tempers of the boys. Under it they were becoming irritable, quick to take offense.

Every night Tug Benson, Chip Harley and Walter met to report progress, or, rather, lack of it. Finally, just a week after the sounding of the "recall," Chip was sent on an errand to the Durant lumber camp. As soon as evening mess was over he signaled Tug and Walter to meet him back of the wood-pile. There was a gleam of triumph in his eyes that belied the studied gloom of his face as he looked up to greet them.

"Well?" said Tug.

"It's Pat, all right!" said Chip sententiously.

"Are you sure? Absolutely sure?" Tug and Walter cried together.

"Sure as—as—sure as I be that skeeters bite," replied Chip, slapping viciously at his neck.

"Did you find the pin?" asked Walter eagerly.

"Naw! You don't suppose he'd be such a fool as to have it lying around in plain sight, do you?" Chip's tone indicated his supreme disgust. "But," he continued, "it's a cinch that he took it just the same. What'd we better do about it?"

"How the deuce do we know, when you haven't told us your story yet? Come, out with it, you tantalizing blockhead!" growled Tug impatiently.

Chip shrugged his shoulders and grinned. "Well," he began, "you know the big chief sent me over to the Durant camp with a message this afternoon. After I'd delivered it I thought I'd just look round a bit, and do a little scoutin'. Pat wasn't there. Fact is, the whole gang was in the woods 'cept the boss and the cook. Got kind of chummy with the cook, and he opened up a nice little can of his own private troubles and poured 'em out for my special benefit.

"Seems he ain't got much use for boys, and for Pat Malone in particular. Nothin' special, I guess, only Pat plays tricks on him and raids his cooky box pretty often. They're good cookies, all right," he added reminiscently.

"Well, I jollied him along," continued Chip, "and went pokin' 'round like I'd never seen a lumber camp before. Pretty soon I see a pair of spiked boots hanging on a nail. 'What'll you take for the boots, cookie?' says I. Cookie grinned. 'Them ain't mine,' says he. 'They belong to that young rascal Pat Malone. I reckon money wouldn't buy 'em of him. Sets as much store by 'em as if they was pure gold. Was give to him by one of the fellers over to your camp.'"

Tug looked up startled. "What's that?" he asked sharply. "You don't suppose—you—say, do you believe it could have been Hal Harrison?"

Chip grinned. "Sure thing," said he. "Found his name in the top of one of 'em."

Tug and Walter looked at each other blankly, while Chip went on with his tale.

"When cookie wasn't looking I just naturally examined those boots a little closer, and measured 'em with a bit of string. They're just the size of those prints we found under Mother Merriam's window, and there's three nails missing from the soles of the right one!" he concluded dramatically. "Now what do you fellers think we'd better do?"

Tug sat down and idly began to throw chips. "Looks bad," he ventured.

"Bad!" snorted Chip, "I call it open and shut, iron-bound, no-loophole evidence! Pat's the thief, or I'll eat my shirt."

"Guess you'll find Durant cookies better eating," said Walter drily.

Chip looked a bit sheepish. Then he slipped a hand into a capacious pocket and brought forth three crisp brown discs. "They are pretty good," he admitted as he passed one to each of the others. "Might as well admit that I followed Pat's lead. Brought 'em along just to prove that I really was there, Walt's such a doubter," he explained ingenuously.

For a few minutes the boys munched the cookies in appreciative silence. When the

last brown crumb had disappeared Chip returned to the subject.

"Well, Walt, what ought we to do?" he demanded.

"Nothing."

Chip got up from the chopping block and dramatically planted himself in front of Walter. "Say, what's chewing you, anyway?" he demanded. "You don't mean to tell us that you still think Pat innocent!"

"I'm not going to think him guilty until there is some proof," replied Walter doggedly.

"Proof!" Chip fairly yelped the word out. "Proof! Haven't I given you proof enough? What more do you want?" Chip flung himself down on the chopping block in sheer disgust.

"It's wholly circumstantial evidence, and —and——" Walter hesitated.

"And what?" demanded Chip. "Spit it out!"

"Why, the fact is——" Walter hesitated again.

"Come on! Come on! Out with it!" Tug broke in.

"Well, there is another pair of hobnailed

boots of the same size in our own camp, and three nails are missing from the right one!"

Chip and Tug stared at him blankly. Then Tug gave vent to a long whistle of incredulity. "Say," he demanded, "what kind of a bunco steer are you givin' us, anyway? Say that over again, you sawed off pocket edition of Sherlock Holmes!"

Walter was somewhat nettled and he replied rather tartly, "I said that there is another pair of boots in camp that might have made those prints."

"Whose are they?" Chip demanded.

Again Walter hesitated, and grew uncomfortably red in the face. "What is the honor of a Scout?" he asked abruptly. "Has one Scout any right to cast suspicion on the honor of another Scout? I don't believe that the owner of this second pair of boots knows any more than we do about Mother Merriam's pin, but if I should tell you who he is you couldn't help but wonder, and wondering, that kind of wondering, leads to suspicion. You couldn't help it. Until this thing is cleared up you couldn't look that fellow straight in the face with quite the same feel-

ing you do now. I didn't mean to say anything about it, but I had to to show how little real evidence Pat's boots afford. By the way, Chip, do you know just which nails are missing from Pat's boot, and which three were lacking in those prints?"

Chip confessed that this was a detail he had wholly overlooked.

"Then that's where we all fall down on the footprint clue," said Walter. "Strikes me we're blamed poor Scouts. The prints are gone now, and if we had both pairs of boots here what good would they do us? Without knowing which nails were missing in the prints we couldn't tell which boots made 'em, and there you are! We'd simply be all the more suspicious of the owner of the second pair of boots."

Tug arose and impulsively held out his hand. "Shake, old man! I for one don't want to know who owns those boots. My, my, this business is bad enough as it is!" he said.

"Them's my sentiments too," Chip broke in. "It's bad enough to suspect one fellow outside the camp, and I should hate awfully

to have that kind of feeling about a brother Scout."

Walter's face cleared as the three shook hands. "I'm glad you fellows see it that way," he said. "We leave matters right where they were then, do we?"

"Sure thing!" Tug spoke emphatically. "Mum's the word. We'll just keep up our quiet little hunt and say nothin'. Gee, but I would hate awfully to think that maybe some of the fellers thought I was a thief! Of course I'm naturally curious about that other pair of boots, but I wouldn't listen now if you tried to tell me, for just as sure as little fishes have tails I'd get to thinkin' about that feller in a way I wouldn't want anybody to think of me. Funny about those boots of Pat's, ain't it? You don't suppose Hal gave 'em to him to pay for—— Oh, rats! There it is! It's with Hal just like it would be with the owner of that second pair of boots. We don't like him. He's licked us to a frazzle fishin', and here we are suspectin' he ain't on the level. Let's cut it out! Say, I've got an idea!"

"Phew! You don't say! I wouldn't have believed it of you, Tug," drawled Chip.

"Hold it down with both hands 'til Walter can identify it."

Tug promptly back-heeled Chip and calmly sat on his head while that unfortunate helplessly thrashed on the ground and in smothered tones begged to be released.

"Think you can be respectful to your elders?" inquired Tug, holding his seat by pinning down both arms of his victim.

A smothered mumble was translated to mean assent, and Chip was released.

Tug proceeded to explain his idea. "You remember what Louis said to Billy the other day? Well, what's the matter with us three hanging together to beat Hal at his own game? We all like fishin', and there's just as big fish in this little old lake as Hal has yanked out of it. If he can find 'em we can. We've been trustin' too much to luck, same as the rest of the fellers do. My idea ——"

Chip cleared his throat, and Tug turned to glare at his erstwhile victim. But that young gentleman looked so innocent as he inquired, "What's your idea, Tug?" that the latter relaxed his belligerent attitude and resumed.

"My idea is that we read up about the dif-

ferent kinds of fish around here, their habits, what they eat, when they feed, the kind of bottom they like best and all that sort of thing. The big chief's got a lot of books about fish, and he'll be tickled silly to have us read 'em. Then we'll pump Big Jim and Tom Mulligan, and do some real scoutin'—for fish instead of thieves. If Hal has anything on us then we'll just naturally take off our hats to him and give him the high sign."

"Bully!" cried Walter. "We've got just time before 'taps' to read up a little on smallmouth black bass, and we'll get away at daybreak to-morrow mornin' for our first scoutin'. I'll go right up t' the big chief's and borrow the book. Tug, you go hunt up Louis and get permission for the three of us to take a canoe and leave before mess, and, Chip, you hustle over and bamboozle cookie into puttin' up a lunch for us."

The others agreed, and the three boys separated on their several errands. As they disappeared in the gathering dusk a rough unkempt figure crawled from behind the woodpile and watched them, an ugly frown darkening his dirty but usually good-natured face.

"Yez think Oi'm a thafe, do yez?" he growled. "Oi don't know what yez think Oi shtole, fer Oi didn't get here in toime ter hear ut all, but if Oi iver get yez alone Oi'll make yez chaw thim wurrds and shwaller thim. Oi'll—Oi'll ——" He shook a grimy fist at the retreating figures. His eyes rested a moment on Walter's square, sturdy figure and he seemed to hear again the quiet voice: "I'm not going to think him guilty 'til there's some proof."

Gradually his face softened. "Thot bye's all roight. He's sound timber, he is," he muttered.

He slipped into the blackness of the forest and presently hit the Durant trail. For the most part his thoughts were as black as the shadows around him.

"Thafe, is ut?" he muttered to himself. "Oi guess ut ain't healthy fer the loikes av me around thot camp. What roight have th' loikes av thim ter be callin' me a thafe jist because Oi'm poor an' live in the woods? What roight have they to be callin' me a thafe, an' me wid no chance ter say a wurrd? What show's a bye loike me got, anyway? Whin

thot Walt bye licked me he said Oi ought ter be a Bye Scout, an' Oi'd begun ter think ut must be somethin' foine. But if this is the way they be afther doin', callin' a bye a thafe widout him iver knowin' what's been shtole, Oi want nothin' ter do at all, at all wid Bye Scouts. Oi wonder what thot honor bus'ness is thot Walt bye talked so much about. Oi'll pump thot bye wid his pockets full av rocks, an' see what he knows about ut."

Abruptly his thoughts reverted to the fishing pact he had overheard and slowly a grin crept among the freckles. "Goin' ter bate Harrison, be yez?" He slipped a hand into a pants pocket and clinked some loose change there. "Oi wonder now, have yez got the price? Oi guess yez don't know what yez be up aginst. Jist the same Oi'd loike thot Walt bye ter win out."

A sudden thought struck him. "Oi wonder now wud he——" He took a silver dollar from his pocket and held it up so that a ray from the rising moon was thrown up from it in a bright gleam. "No," he said, "no, Oi don't belave he wud, though why not Oi don't see at all, at all."

He rapidly strode forward to the bunk-house, and for once forgot to play a good-night trick on the long-suffering cook.

The moon crept higher and higher. It filtered through the great forest and touched the white birches with ghostly gleam. It looked down upon a thousand tragedies among the little people of the night. It bathed the two camps in silvery light, and all unconscious of the greater tragedy in the hearts of men, it caressed into points of living flame the tiny diamonds in Mother Merriam's pin.

But there was no one there to see, and for a few hours even the specter in the wigwams slept.

CHAPTER VII

FIRST LESSONS

WALTER'S skill with his camera gradually won for him the distinction of being the best photographer in camp. When, therefore, he somewhat diffidently told Chief Woodhull of his ambition to secure some flash-light views of deer the chief listened attentively to the plans suggested for securing them, and promised to lay them before Dr. Merriam. Imagine Walter's delight when on the following day the big chief sent for him, and after close questioning informed him that it was arranged for him to make a two days' trip to Lonesome Pond with Big Jim for the purpose of trying for the coveted photographs of wild deer in their native haunts.

It was an almost unprecedented honor for a first year boy. The privilege of making such an expedition alone with one of the guides was reserved for the older boys, whose experience and training fitted them for the

"roughing" which such a trip usually involved. Walter fairly walked on air when he left Dr. Merriam to seek Big Jim and make the necessary arrangements. He found the guide tinkering with a jack-light.

"Dr. Merriam says ——" began Walter.

"I know all about it, son," interrupted the guide. "You an' me'll be pardners for a couple o' days, and we'll start before daylight to-morrow morning. Rustle round now and get your picter machine ready. I reckon Mr. Peaked Toes will be a mighty unsartin subjec', a leetle mite bashful. If you don't get him th' first shot, 'tain't likely he'll wait fer a second, so it's up to you t' hev everythin' in workin' order. Run over an' tell cookie thet I want two loaves o' bread, a slab o' bacon, some butter in a wide-mouth jar, flour, salt, cocoa an' sugar fer a two days' trip. We're goin' light, so you won't need t' bring nothin' but yer fish rod, blankets, sneaks an' an extra handkercher. Better turn in early, fer we want t' start at four o'clock sharp. Hev cookie put up a lunch. Now skip!"

At quarter of four the next morning Walter slipped out of the wigwam. The moon had

not yet set, while in the east appeared the first faint flush of the coming day. The forest lay black and still. For a moment or two he shivered in the chill of the outer air after the warmth of the wigwam. There was a light in the guides' cabin, and thither he made his way at once.

Just outside the door stood a pack basket, a tightly rolled blanket lashed across it, and the handle of a frying-pan protruding from the top. Big Jim's favorite paddle leaned against it. As Walter approached, the door opened and the guide stepped out.

"Hello, pard!" said he. "I was jes' comin' over t' pull yer out o' yer blankets. Come in here an' hev a cup o' hot cocoa an' stow thet snack away; it's easier t' carry inside than out."

When Walter had gulped down the hot drink and eaten the lunch put up for him by the cook he felt ready for anything.

As they took their way down the trail to the lake the hoot of a great horned owl suddenly broke the silence and wakened startled echoes on Old Scraggy.

"Whooo-hoo-hoo-hoo! Whooo-hoo-hoo!"

"Ole Fly-by-night must hev had poor huntin' last evenin'," said the guide. "Do you see him, son?"

Walter searched the trees near at hand, but could make out nothing that resembled a bird, and his chagrin was deepened by the guide's next remark.

"Them books may tell yer where t' look, but they don't teach yer how t' use th' eyes God give yer. Now any five-year-old born in th' woods would hev seen thet big swelled up bunch o' feathers fust thing. Look at thet tall pine stump over thar t' th' right and ——"

"Whooo-hoo-hoo-hoo! Whooo-hoo-hoo!" rang the fierce cry again, and almost on the instant the top of the stump resolved into a huge, broad-winged bird, that swiftly and noiselessly dropped behind a low hemlock. A moment later it reappeared, a hare struggling in its talons, and flew heavily over toward a swamp. Big Jim promptly seized upon the episode to drive home a lesson in woodcraft.

"Pard," said he, "thar's a better lesson in the A B C o' wood life than I could give yer in a month o' talkin'. If thet hare hadn't let

its narves go on th' jump, and had remembered what she ought t' hev knowed afore she was born, thet to sit tight an' not move a muscle when yer don't want t' be seen is th' first law o' th' woods, she'd be sittin' nice an' snug this very minute, instead o' stuffin' ole Fly-by-night's craw. Puss was narvous. The hoot startled her an' she moved jest a leetle bit. Probably she rustled a leaf. Them big owls is all ears. Fact, son ; the whole side o' th' head, pretty near, is an ear. He heared thet leaf rustle, an' he was Johnny-on-the-spot in a jiffy. Yer saw what happened. Never make a sudden move in th' woods. Sit tight if yer don't want t' be seen, or move so slowly thet nothin's goin' t' notice it. Don't never ferget it ! Yer've jes' seen what fergettin' may cost. When yer go in th' woods leave yer narves t' hum."

The pack basket and duffle were stowed in the middle of the canoe, Walter took the bow seat and the guide, kneeling in the stern, for he had never outgrown his early training when canoes of his acquaintance had no seats, shot the little craft out into the lake. As they turned into the low marshy estuary

which marked the outlet of the lake, the first rays of the rising sun glanced over Mt. Seward.

Once in the main channel of the river they felt the gentle force of the current, and under Jim's powerful stroke they swept swiftly on. Walter had been doing his full share, for he was a good paddler, but now the guide suggested that he put up his paddle and hold his camera ready for whatever they might surprise along the river's edge, or up some of the numerous setbacks.

The boy put his paddle aside and, slipping a film pack into the camera, set the focus for one hundred feet. Then with thumb and forefinger of his right hand on the focussing screw, ready to shorten the focus should they get within less than one hundred feet of a subject, he set himself to watch the shores.

"Remember now, no talkin' an' no sudden moves," cautioned the guide.

Alas for Walter! The lesson had yet to be driven home. Not five minutes later the canoe shot around a bend, and without a sound glided into a setback. Almost instantly a low warning hiss from Big Jim put

Walter on his guard. The canoe seemed merely to drift, but if the boy could have seen the guide he would have witnessed a magnificent exhibition of the canoeman's art as, with paddle deep in the water and moving so slowly as to make hardly a perceptible ripple, he still kept the craft under perfect control.

Walter, every nerve tense, scanned the shores in a vain effort to discover the cause of the guide's warning. Inch by inch the canoe crept on and still the boy saw nothing but the placid, pad-strewn surface of the water, and the forest-lined shore. Presently his eager ears caught a faint splash off to his right. Like a flash he turned, swinging his camera with him. The next instant he realized his mistake. With a sharp whistle of surprise and alarm a doe noisily splashed shoreward from a point not fifty yards distant, where she had been standing among the lily-pads. From the instant the canoe had first caught her attention and excited her curiosity she had remained so motionless that Walter had failed utterly to pick her out from the background with which her protective coloring blended so marvelously.

But the moment the boy moved she whirled for the shore, sending the water flying in a shower of silver. As the boy, in open-mouthed astonishment, watched her she lightly leaped a fallen log, and with a parting flirt of her white flag disappeared in the undergrowth.

Walter's chagrin was too deep for words. Indeed, he was very near to tears as he realized what a rare opportunity he had missed, and how wholly his own fault it was. He did not dare look at Big Jim, and there was no comfort in the guide's slow, sarcastic drawl:

"A clean miss, pard. Did them books teach yer thet lightnin' whirl? 'Pears t' me thet you an' puss back thar, keepin' company with ole Fly-by-night, belong in th' same class. Now if yer mem'ry had been as good as yer fergittery we'd most likely hev drifted right up t' thet thar deer. No use wastin' more time in here. Some day when yer hev larned a leetle more woodcraft mebbe we'll run down an' try it agen."

This surely was rubbing it in, and Big Jim meant it to be so. Right down in his big heart he was almost as disappointed for

the boy as was the boy himself, but he felt that this was the time to drive the lesson home. Every word stung the chagrined young photographer like a whip-lash, and he could not trust himself to make reply. He was mortified beyond expression, for he had prided himself that he knew the value of noiselessness and motionlessness, and that when the test should come he would win golden opinions from the guide for his display of woodcraft. Now, at the very first opportunity, he had failed miserably, acting like the veriest tyro, and he felt himself humbled to the last degree.

Had he turned he might have caught a kindly twinkle in the blue eyes watching the dejected droop of his figure, but he kept his face steadily to the front, gazing fixedly ahead, yet seeing nothing, while automatically he swung his paddle and gloomily lived over the bitterness of his mistake.

They were now once more in the current, and in a matter-of-fact way the guide suggested that Walter put his paddle up and be ready for whatever else might offer. As he adjusted the camera the boy resolved that

this time, come what might, he would show Big Jim that he had learned his lesson.

The opportunity came sooner than he had dared hope it would. The canoe swerved sharply toward the east bank, and presently Walter made out a little brown bunch on the end of a log. With a nod of the head he signaled the guide that he saw, and then attended strictly to his end of the matter in hand. By this time the canoe was close in to the bank, so deftly handled that it would approach within twenty feet of the log before emerging from the screen of a fallen tree which the guide had instantly noted and taken advantage of.

Jim was paddling only enough for steerage way, allowing the current to drift them down. They were now close to the fallen tree, and the guide began to silently work the little craft around the outer end. Walter had reduced the focus to twenty-five feet. As they drifted nearer and nearer to the subject he began to shake with nervous excitement, so that it was only by the exercise of all his will power that he could hold the camera steady. Inch by inch they crept past the tree and

Walter strained his eyes for a glimpse of the old log with its little bunch of fur. He was holding his breath from sheer excitement. Ha! There was the outer end of the log, and there, a foot or so back, sat a muskrat, wholly oblivious to their presence.

Slowly, with the utmost caution, Walter turned in his seat, so slowly that it seemed ages to him. The guide had checked the canoe within less than twenty feet of the log and Walter altered his focus accordingly. Now in his reflecting finder he clearly saw the little fur bearer, a mussel in his paws. With a sigh of relief Walter heard the click of the shutter in response to the squeeze of the bulb, held in his left hand. Then as the rat made a frightened plunge, he remembered that he had forgotten to withdraw the slide before making the exposure.

It is an error the novice frequently makes and that the expert is sometimes guilty of. It was, therefore, not surprising that under the stress of excitement Walter should suffer this lapse of memory, but coming as it did immediately after his other fiasco, it was almost more than he could bear.

Big Jim was chuckling delightedly over the supposed success. "Reckon musky never set fer his picter afore! Did he look pleasant? Pard, yer sure did thet trick well. Had a bit o' buck fever fust along, I reckon. Thought yer seemed kind o' shaky. Don't yer mind thet none. I've seen a feller with a clean open shot at a standin' deer within fifty yards wobble his rifle round so thet th' safest thing in thet neighborhood was thet thar deer. Now we'll go on fer th' next."

Walter did not have the courage to tell the guide then of his second blunder, but resolved that when they got in camp that night he would own up like a man. For the next three miles nothing eventful occurred. Then the boy got his third chance. It was a great blue heron this time. It was standing on one foot, the other drawn up until it was hidden among the feathers of the under part of the body. The long neck was laid back on the shoulders, the sharp bill half buried in the feathers of the breast. The big bird appeared to be dozing. The light fell just right, and as it was intensified by reflection from the water, Walter felt sure of a good photograph.

Little by little the canoe drifted in. Forty feet, thirty, twenty, ten—click! This time there was no mistake. Working quickly but cautiously, with as little motion as possible, he pulled out and tore off the tab, set the shutter and, as the big bird spread its wings, a second click caught it at the very start of its flight. The shutter was set at the two hundredth part of a second, so that despite the nearness of the subject, Walter felt reasonably certain that little movement would show in the photograph.

"Get him?" asked Jim.

"Two of him," replied Walter, a note of pardonable pride in his voice.

"Thet's th' stuff! Ye're larnin' fast," said the guide, once more shooting the canoe into the current.

This success went far to offset the previous failures and the boy's spirits rose. He began to enjoy his surroundings as he had not been able to since the episode with the deer. Mile after mile slipped behind them, the limpid brown water sliding between the unbroken wilderness on either bank. Try as he would he could not get over the impression of sliding

down-hill, such was the optical effect of the swiftly-moving water.

At last he heard a dull roar which increased in volume with every minute. Then they rounded a sharp turn, and before them the whole river became a churning, tumbling mass of white, with here and there an ugly black rock jutting above the surface. The canoe felt the increased movement of the water and the boy's heart beat faster as the bow of the little craft still pointed straight down the middle of the river. Could it be that Big Jim would try to run those tumbling, roaring rapids!

"Sit tight and don't move!" came the guide's sharp, terse command.

The canoe all but grazed a great gray boulder. Then dead ahead, not two inches under water, Walter saw another. Surely they must strike this, and then—he closed his eyes for just a second. When he opened them the canoe was just shooting through the churning froth on the edge of the rock, and that immediate danger was past. He realized then how completely the man behind him was master of the river and their

craft. With fascinated eyes he watched each new danger loom up and pass almost before he realized its ugly threat.

The roar of the rapids was now so loud that it drowned all other sounds. Presently he became aware that they were no longer in mid-stream. With a few powerful strokes the guide shot the canoe into a back eddy and a second later it grounded lightly on a tiny sand beach where Jim held it until Walter could leap out and pull it up securely.

"How'd yer like thet?" shouted the guide as he lifted his pack basket out.

"Great!" replied the boy, his eyes shining with excitement, as he helped take out the duffle.

Big Jim adjusted the basket to his back, lashed the paddles across the thwarts of the canoe so that when they rested on his shoulders, with the canoe inverted over his head, it balanced perfectly, and leaving Walter to follow with the rest of the duffle plunged into what seemed at first glance an almost impenetrable thicket of maple, birch and moosewood.

Walter found, however, that there was a well-defined trail, albeit a rough one. It fol-

lowed the course of the river, over moss-grown decaying tree trunks, across old skidways, now firm to the foot and again a bed of oozy black swamp muck in which he sank halfway to his knees. After a mile of this they came out on the bank of the river just at the foot of the falls which marked the end of the rapids. The canoe was launched at once and in a few minutes they were again speeding down-stream.

Three and a half miles below they made another portage. This put them in a lake at the upper end of which a shallow stream connected with a string of three small ponds. The last of these was known as Lonesome Pond, and this was their destination.

CHAPTER VIII

LONESOME POND

LONESOME POND was well named. A mile long by perhaps half a mile wide at its widest point, it lay like a turquoise in an emerald setting between two mountains whose upper slopes were dark with a splendid stand of spruce and pine. A magnificent growth of birch, maple and ash with an occasional pine or hemlock scattered among them grew to the water's edge, save along the southern end where they had entered. Here for some distance a sphagnum swamp, dotted with graceful tamaracks, extended on either side of the narrow outlet, in places forming a natural open meadow.

The pond was shallow at this end, with great masses of lily-pads, both of the white and the yellow or cow-lily. In contrast to this the shore of the upper end was bold and rocky, heavily wooded to the water's edge. Here on a tiny patch of shingle, the only

break in the rocky shore line, the canoe was beached. A trail led up for a hundred yards into a grove of hemlocks where, completely hidden from the lake, was the camp which was Big Jim's objective point. Two comfortable lean-tos had been built perhaps ten feet apart and facing each other, with a stout windbreak closing one side between the two. The lean-tos were of hemlock bark, peeled from forest giants and flattened to huge sheets. These sheets formed the sides, back and steeply sloping roofs, the entire front of each, after the manner of all lean-tos, being left open. In the middle, between the two, were the charred embers of old fires, while the matted brown needles of small hemlock and balsam twigs in both lean-tos bore mute witness to the spicy, comfortable beds of other campers. A rough board table stood at one side of the fireplace.

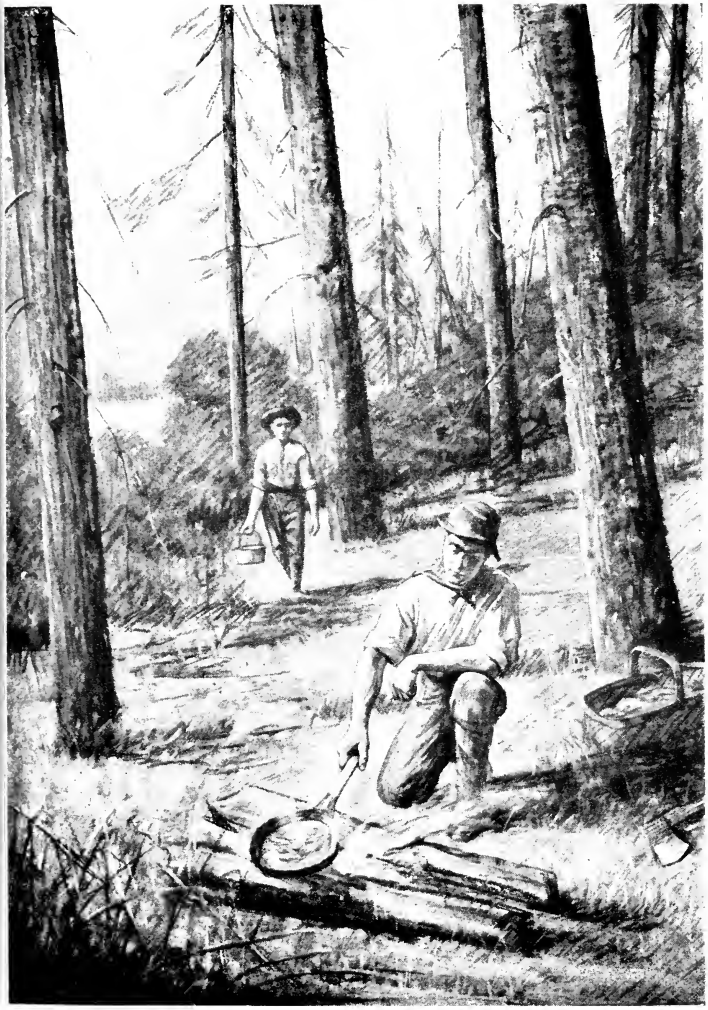
"Here we be, pard," said Big Jim as he swung his basket to the ground. "You take this pail an' follow thet trail yonder till you find a spring, while I dig out th' grub. Reckon you must be hungry. We'll hev a bit o' bacon now and a good square meal to-night."

It was long past noon, and now that the ex-

citement of the journey was over Walter realized how empty his stomach was. He found the spring easily, and when he returned Big Jim already had his basket unpacked and was just starting the fire. He had cut two bed logs about six feet long and eight or ten inches in diameter. These he had flattened on top and one side and had placed side by side, flat sides opposite and some three inches apart at one end, spreading to ten inches at the other. Between these he had built a fire of hemlock bark started with birch bark, which, by the way, is as good as kerosene for starting a fire. In a few minutes he had a bed of glowing coals over which the frying-pan was soon sizzling, and that most delicious of all odors, frying bacon, mingled with pungent wood smoke, assailed the boy's eager nostrils.

By making the fireplace and fire in this way, Big Jim explained, the frying-pan rested on an even surface, with a steady even heat beneath it, and one could squat beside it in comfort without becoming unduly heated. At the same time the bacon was cooked thoroughly without scorching.

A kettle of water was set over the coals to



HE HAD BUILT A FIRE

wash the tin plates, knives and forks when the meal was over. How good that bacon, bread and butter did taste, washed down by clear cold water! It seemed to the hungry boy that he never had eaten such a meal, its one fault being that there wasn't enough of it. But Big Jim laughed at him, telling him that that was only a lunch, but that he should have a real dinner at sundown.

When the dishes were cleared away Big Jim took his axe and went back into the woods returning presently with half a dozen forked sticks of green wood. Two of these about four feet long were driven into the ground, one at each end of the fireplace. Across them, supported in the forks, was laid a straight young sapling which the guide called a lug-pole. Then he took one of the other sticks and cut it off about three inches above the fork or crotch, leaving a good hand grasp. One branch was cut off some four inches from the fork, the other branch being left long enough so that when a small nail was driven in the end on the opposite side from the short part of the fork and the fork inverted over the lug-stick a pail hung from the nail would

swing just over the coals. Other sticks were made in the same way, but of varying lengths. The camp range was then complete.

The long sticks (they are called pot-hooks) were for bringing a kettle close to the fire, while the shorter ones would allow of keeping things simmering without boiling or danger of burning. Moreover, by simply taking up a pot-hook by the hand grasp a kettle could be moved anywhere along the lug-stick away from the hottest part of the fire without burning the hands. It was simple, quickly made, yet for all top cooking as effective as the gas range at home, and Walter felt that he had learned an important lesson in woodcraft.

After the dishes were cleared away Big Jim led the way to a balsam thicket, taking with him two straight sticks about four feet long, hooked at the lower end. With his axe he rapidly lopped over a mass of balsam twigs, showing Walter how to slip them on to the long sticks so that when he had finished they had two big green spicy cylindrical piles of balsam with a hand grasp at the top to carry them by. Returning to camp Jim rapidly made up two beds. Small boughs were laid

first, overlapping so that the butts were hidden. A deep layer of the small twigs were then laid on in the same way and behold! a bed a king might covet!

About four o'clock the guide told Walter to rig his rod and they would go in quest of their dinner. Paddling over to a cove where several springs fed the lake they drifted idly while the guide studied the various insects on and above the water. Finally he told Walter to rig two flies, a brown hackle for the tail and a professor for the dropper. The boy had already become fairly proficient in getting his line out cleanly and dropping his flies with that lightness which so closely simulates the falling of the living insects on the water. As yet he had seen no indications of fish, but he was impatient to try his luck. Big Jim, however, was lazily smoking, and Walter was forced to be content with admiring the wonderful panorama of lake and mountain spread before him as they idly drifted. Presently there was a splash on the edge of the shadows inshore, and then Walter caught a gleam of silver as another fish broke the mirror-like surface. The fish had begun to rise.

With the same noiseless stroke that Walter had so much admired in the morning Big Jim worked the canoe shoreward toward the widening circle where the last fish had broken. At his signal Walter cast, ten feet—twenty feet—thirty feet. The flies dropped lightly almost directly above the spot where they had seen the fish. Hardly had the tackle touched the water when there was a swift flash of silver and with a deft twist of the wrist Walter struck.

With a rush the fish started for deep water, while the reel sang merrily. Gently but steadily Walter applied the pressure of the rod, when the first rush was checked, reeling in every inch of slack, until five minutes later he led the tired captive within reach of Big Jim's eager fingers, which closed in his gills and the prize was theirs, a shining half-pound spotted beauty, which the guide promptly and mercifully killed by slipping a thumb into the mouth and bending the head back till the spine broke at the neck.

So they drifted alongshore, Walter taking two more of about the size of the first one, and several smaller ones. As they approached

a lone rock some fifty feet offshore he made a long careful cast just to the edge of the deepest shadow of the rock. The strike which followed was so fierce and the strain on the rod so great that but for the screaming of the reel Walter would have been sure that he had caught a snag. But there was no mistaking the active form at the other end of the line. Big Jim had waked to the battle royal now in progress and was bringing to bear all his skill in the handling of the canoe.

Straight out into the lake shot the fish. "Give him th' butt, boy, give him th' butt, but be careful!" shouted the guide. This Walter did, elevating the tip of the rod until the springing little bamboo was bent almost double, the fish pulling against the full spring of the rod, clear from the butt. This served to check the rush. A period of sulking in deep water followed. Then the line slackened until it hung limply from the end of the straightened rod.

"He's off," thought Walter, his heart sinking. But the guide was not so easily fooled.

"Reel, boy, reel!" he shouted, deftly turning the canoe as on a pivot.

Then Walter waked to the fact that the fish had started a rush straight toward the canoe, hence the slack line. Madly he reeled until a sharp tug that pulled the tip of his rod under water told him that he was still fast. With a sigh of relief he gently increased the pressure.

"Must be a four pounder, sartin," said the guide, skilfully keeping the canoe bow on. "Funny he don't break water. He ought t' hev been in th' air half a dozen times 'fore this."

Thus far they had not had so much as a glimpse of the finny warrior. Thrice he had come almost to the surface, but instead of the silver flash arching through the air, which is the joy of the fisherman, there had been no more than a sudden swirl of the placid surface, and the fish had again sought the depths.

Walter's wrist was feeling the strain. Despite the excitement he was becoming tired. His heart was pounding with conflicting emotions, alternate hope of landing a record prize and fear of losing it. Another fit of sulking gave him a few minutes' respite. When the

next rush started he felt that it was weaker, nor was it as long. Inch by inch he was recovering his line, not for one instant relaxing the steady strain on the fish.

The rushes were short now and quickly checked. Inch by inch, foot by foot the reel took up the line. At last in the clear depths he got a glimpse of a shadowy form as it started another rush. Big Jim had seen too. Indeed, he had seen more than Walter had.

"Two o' em, by gum!" he shouted. "Steady now, pard! 'Twon't be safe t' try t' land 'em in th' canoe without a landin' net. I'm goin' t' work in t' thet bit o' shingle over yonder. Jes' yer keep 'em comin' an' don't let up on 'em fer a minute."

The guide was right. Both flies had been seized at once. By this time Walter could occasionally see the two fish, and the sight brought his heart into his throat. Could he save both? What a chance to score for the Delawares! And what a record to send home to father! He understood now why there had been no leaping; the fish had checkmated each other.

As the canoe grated on the pebbles the

guide leaped over, knee-deep in the water. Walter stood up and gently led the fish toward the waiting guide. So tired were they that they were almost passive, their broad tails feebly winnowing as, getting the line in his left hand, Big Jim drew them slowly to him. Gently he sank his right arm in the water that no sudden move should startle the fish into a last frantic struggle. Would he save them? Walter sat down weakly, trembling with the strain and anxiety.

Slowly the guide's big hand slipped up the length of the fish on the dropper. The stout fingers locked in the gills, there was a deft throw—Walter could never tell just how it was done—and both fish were flapping on the shore. Jim threw himself upon them a second after, for his quick eye had seen that the tail fly had torn out. When he stood up he held out a fish in each hand, such fish! The young angler could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes.

"Smallest'll weigh 'bout two an' a half pounds, an' 'tother 'bout a pound heftier," said Jim, eyeing them critically. "Pard, thet's goin' some fer a beginner. Reckon yer

must carry a rabbit's foot in yer pocket fer luck."

Walter disclaimed any witch charms whatsoever as he produced the neat little spring scales which had been a parting gift from his father. These proved the accuracy of Jim's guess, one being an ounce less and the other an ounce and a half more than the weights he had named. They were the true broad tails or speckled trout, commonly called brook trout (Salvilinus fontinalis) than which no more beautiful fish swims.

As he admired their exquisitely painted sides something very like regret for a moment subdued the boy's elation and pride, for he was one of the true nature lovers, to whom the destruction of life must ever bring a feeling of sadness.

As the guide shoved off Walter started to bend on a change of flies, but to this Big Jim quickly put a stop.

"Pard," said he, "no true sportsman will ever kill more'n he needs. We've got enough —all we can use. The man who kills jes' fer th' fun o' killin' ain't nothin' more'n a butcher. He'd better get a job in one o'

them big slaughter-houses. When I find I'm guidin' fer one o' thet breed he most gen'rally don't hev no luck."

Walter felt the rebuke, but he was fair minded enough to appreciate and not resent it. Nor did he ever forget it.

Back at camp Big Jim at once started preparations for dinner. Going into the woods he cut a small log of hard wood about two feet long, out of which he split a slab about three inches thick. One side of this he rapidly smoothed. Under his direction Walter had, in the meantime, built a fire of small pieces of hard wood. This was soon a bed of glowing coals which would retain their heat for a long time, a property which soft woods do not possess, as the guide took pains to impress upon him. For this reason hard-wood coals are always preferable for cooking.

When the slab was smoothed to Jim's satisfaction he propped it up in front of the coals. Splitting the largest fish down the back its entire length, taking care not to cut through the belly, he cleaned it and wiped it dry. When the slab was hot he tacked the fish to it, skin side down, and spread full width.

Then the slab was once more propped in front of the fire and three strips of bacon were hung across the top so that the fat would try out and drip on the fish. When it became necessary to reverse the ends of the slab so that the fish would cook evenly the bacon was taken off and impaled on the pointed end of a small stick, it becoming Walter's duty to hold this so that the drip would continue to baste the fish.

While Walter tended the fish the guide made a reflector according to an idea Walter had given him. Lashing together two sticks in the form of a T, one two and a half feet long and the other a foot long, he tacked a piece of birch about two feet wide to the ends of the T, thus forming a segment of a circle. The white side of the bark was turned in. A flat piece of hemlock bark was fitted across the sticks and a rough handle was lashed to the whole. The result was a crude but effective reflector to concentrate the light from a flash in a given direction.

By the time this was finished the fish was done to a turn. A dash of salt and pepper was added, and it was ready to serve

on the slab on which it was cooked. Have you ever sat under the sweet smelling hemlocks, careless of all else in the world save securing your full share of the flaky pink flesh of a trout cooked in this way? If you have then your mouth is watering this very minute. If you have not—ah, why try to describe it? My advice to you is simply this: Follow Walter's example at the earliest opportunity.

Bread with butter and hot cocoa (Dr. Merriam tabooed coffee or tea for growing boys) completed the menu. When the dinner was finished, to the last shred of pink flesh clinging to crisp brown skin, Walter felt that never before in all his life had he eaten half so delicious a meal.

With dinner out of the way and camp made ready for the night they prepared to put into execution the plan which was the real object of the trip. There was no moon, for the sky was overcast, and the night promised to be very dark. This was much to Jim's liking, for the blacker the night the less likelihood that the deer would see ought but the baleful, fascinating glare of the jack-light.

It was nine o'clock when they left camp, Walter in the bow as usual, but this time with nothing to occupy his attention but his camera and the jack-light strapped on his hat. The reflector was within easy reach of the guide, to whom Walter had given careful instructions in its use. A flash, consisting of two No. 2 cartridges, had been prepared and wires connected from a couple of electric batteries. Jim had merely to press a button to fire the flash.

It was agreed that Walter should set his focus for one hundred feet and that, should they be lucky enough to find the deer, the judging of the distance and setting off of the flash should be left to the guide.

It was weird, uncanny, that paddle down the lake, the black water beneath them and a black formless void around and above them. A dozen strokes from shore Walter felt as utterly lost so far as sense of direction was concerned as if blindfolded. But not so Big Jim. He sent the canoe forward as confidently as if in broad daylight. The jack was lighted but not uncovered.

Walter became aware presently that the

canoe was moving very much more slowly and he suspected that they were approaching the lower end of the pond. At a whispered word he turned on the jack. The narrow beam of light cutting athwart the darkness made the night seem blacker by contrast. Very, very slowly they were moving, and there was not so much as the sound of a ripple against their light craft.

The boy sat motionless, but listen as he would he could detect no smallest sound to denote the presence of his companion, much less to indicate that he was paddling. But paddling he was, and the canoe steadily crept forward. A mighty chorus of frog voices in many keys evidenced the close proximity of the meadows surrounding the outlet. As the canoe's course was altered to parallel the shore the boy cautiously turned in his seat so that the rays from the jack were directed shoreward. At that distance, even in the very center of the beam of light, the shore was but a ghostly outline, and Walter wondered how it could be possible that they could see the eyes of a deer.

Once the heavy plunge of a muskrat made

him jump inwardly, for his nerves were keyed to a high pitch. He was beginning to feel cramped from so long maintaining one position. One foot and leg had gone to sleep. But he grimly ground his teeth and resolved that, come what might, he would not move.

A slight tremor on the port side of the canoe attracted his attention and he realized that Big Jim was shaking it, the signal agreed upon should the guide see the deer first. Walter forgot his discomfort. Eagerly he stared at the shore. For a few minutes he saw nothing unusual. Suddenly he became conscious of two luminous points—the eyes of a deer gazing in fixed fascinated stare at the light. He could discern no faintest outline of the animal, but the eyes glowed steadily, unwinking.

Inch by inch the canoe drifted in. Suddenly the two glowing points disappeared. Walter's heart sank. Had the animal taken fright? No, there they were again! The deer had merely lowered its head for a moment. A shake of the canoe warned the boy that there was something more. Turning his own eyes from the two burning there in the blackness

he presently became aware of two more, smaller and lower down. A second later he saw a third pair.

What could it mean? Could it be that the deer had enemies stalking it? What if it should be a lynx or even a panther! His excited imagination conjured up a thrilling scene. What if he could photograph it! He longed to ask the guide what it all meant, but that was impossible.

Slowly, slowly they drifted in toward the three pairs of eyes. Walter kept his camera pointed directly at them, the shutter open, not knowing what instant the flash might go off. Still they drifted in, Walter as fascinated by the six glowing points as were the deer by the jack. Inch by inch, inch by inch they drew nearer. Would the flash never go? Walter felt that he must turn and see what Big Jim was doing. Could it be that Jim had disconnected the wires and was unable to fire the flash?

Even as this dread possibility entered his mind the water and shore directly in front of him were lit by a blinding glare. He had an instantaneous impression of a doe and two

fawns staring in curious alarm from near the shore of a wild meadow flanked by ghostly tamaracks. Quite automatically he squeezed the bulb that closed the shutter. Then for a few minutes he could see nothing. But he could hear the plunging of the frightened animals as they fled for the shelter of the forest, and his heart leaped at thought of what that negative in his camera must hold.

"Git 'em, pard?" drawled the voice of the guide.

"I guess so. I don't see how I could help it. Anyway, I held the camera pointed right at them," replied Walter.

"Guess thet'll do fer to-night, son," said Jim, swinging the canoe about. "Shut off th' jack an' git out yer paddle. It's us fer th' blankets now!"

CHAPTER IX

A SHOT IN THE DUSK

Day breaks in the great forest in a hushed solemnity, as if all nature bowed in silent worship. The very leaves hang motionless. The voices of the night are stilled. The prowlers in the dark have slunk back to their lairs. The furred and feathered folk who people the mighty woodland through all the hours of light have not yet awakened. The peace of the perfect stillness is at once a benediction and a prayer.

It was at just this hour that Walter awoke. There was no sound save the heavy breathing of Big Jim. For a few minutes he lay peering out through a break in the bark wall of the shack. Swiftly the gray light threaded the forest aisles. A rosy flush touched the top of a giant pine and instantly, as if this were a signal, a white-throated sparrow softly fluted its exquisite song from a thicket close

by the camp. Another more distant took up the song, and another and another until the woods rang with the joyous matins. A red squirrel chirred sharply and his claws rattled on the bark of the roof as he scampered across. A rabbit thumped twice close at hand. Cautiously raising himself on one elbow Walter discovered the little gray-coated fellow peering with timid curiosity into the opposite lean-to.

As if this were the morning alarm Big Jim yawned, then sprang from his blankets. Brer Rabbit dived headlong for the underbrush, but the guide's quick eyes caught the flash of bunny's white tail, and he laughed good-naturedly.

"Why didn't you invite him t' breakfast, son?" he inquired.

Walter grinned as he crawled out of his blankets. "Felt too bashful on such short acquaintance," he replied.

"Pro'bly them's his feelin's, too," said the guide, producing two rough towels from the depths of his pack basket. "Now fer a wash and then breakfast."

There was a sharp nip to the air that made

Walter shiver at the thought of what the water must be like. He dreaded that first plunge, but he said nothing, and followed Big Jim's lead down to the lake. To his surprise he found the water warmer than the air, as if the heavy blanket of mist in which the lake was still shrouded was indeed a coverlid provided to hold fast the warmth absorbed from the sun of yesterday. A brisk swim followed by an equally brisk rub-down banished all thoughts of chill, and just as the first low-flung rays of the rising sun burned a hole through the slowly rising vapor they started back for camp and breakfast.

"You start th' fire while I rastle round th' grub," said the guide, as he once more dug down into the pack. "How will flapjacks and th' rest o' them trout hit yer fer a lining fer yer stomach, pard?"

While the guide prepared the batter Walter showed how well he had learned his lesson in fire building the night before. Between the two big bed-logs he placed two fairly good-sized sticks about a foot apart. Dry twigs and splinters were laid loosely across, and on these at one side some strips of birch bark.

Two more sticks were now laid across the twigs at right angles, then another layer of small sticks. The next layer of larger sticks was laid at right angles to the former. So the pile was built up, log-cabin fashion, good-sized split hard wood being used for the upper layers.

Touching a match to the birch bark he had the satisfaction of seeing the whole mass leap into flame in less than a minute because, built in this way, air had immediate circulation to the whole mass, free access of air being essential to a brisk fire. Then again the whole would burn down together to live coals, the object to be obtained for successful cooking.

In the meantime Big Jim had stirred up the flapjack batter and gone in quest of the trout, which had been left in a pail hung on the stub of a dead branch of a pine near by. He returned with a look of chagrin on his good-natured face.

"Reckon, pard, thet we've had more visitors than thet leetle cottontail we ketched a glimpse o' this mornin'. If yer ain't no ways pertic'lar you an' me will have bacon stid o' trout with them flapjacks. Ought t' known

thet if leetle ole Mr. Mink really wanted them fish he wouldn't mind takin' th' trouble t' shin up a tree. If I'd hung thet pail by a wire as I'd ought t' hev, Mr. Mink wouldn't hev th' laugh on us now."

Walter laughed at the rueful face of the guide. "How do you know it was a mink?" he asked.

"'Cause thar's no other critter in these here woods likes fish well enough t' use his wits thet way t' git 'em. Besides, he wasn't pertic'lar 'bout coverin' up his tracks. Left 'em 'round most promiscus and insultin'. Say, son," he added, his face brightening with a sudden thought, "you take thet tin dipper and hit th' trail past th' big pine over yonder. Keep a-goin' till yer strike a patch o' old burned-over ground. Yesterday I see a lot o' early blueberries over thar. Pick th' dipper full and I'll give yer somethin' t' tickle yer ribs so thet yer'll fergit all about them trout."

Walter took the dipper and following the trail shortly reached the burned land. Sure enough, there were the berries, so plentiful that it took but a short time to fill the dipper. Before he reached camp he smelt the bacon

and his mouth watered. A pot of steaming cocoa hung from one of the pot-hooks, and a plate of crisp bacon rested on one end of the fore-log where it would keep warm.

Big Jim took the dipper with a grin of satisfaction and stirred the berries into his kettle of batter. Then into the sizzling hot frying-pan, well greased with bacon fat, he poured enough batter to cover the bottom, and placed it over the glowing coals before which he squatted, watching the bubbling cake with a critical eye. Suddenly he lifted the pan, and with a dextrous twist of the wrist, so deftly executed that Walter did not see how the trick was done, the flapjack was sent into the air, where it turned over and was caught in the pan, brown side up as it came down. It was returned to the fire all in the one motion and two minutes later, buttered and sugared, was on its way to "line Walter's ribs."

"Well, pard, how do yer like 'em?" inquired the cook, sending another spinning over to Walter's plate.

"They're just the best ever!" exclaimed the boy enthusiastically. "I'm going to teach cook to make 'em when I get home. Wish

dad could have one of these right now. Say, Jim, it's my turn to fry now."

The guide tossed one more to begin on while Walter was frying the next, and then turned the frying-pan over to the amateur cook. Big Jim's eyes twinkled as the boy reached for a knife with which to turn the cake. His big hand closed over the knife first.

"Nobody can be a side pardner o' mine who has t' take a knife t' turn a flapjack," he drawled, "and, son, I kind o' think I'd like you fer a side pardner. Thet bein' so, up she goes!"

Walter grinned sheepishly and gave the frying-pan an awkward toss. The required twist of the wrist was wholly lacking and, instead of turning a graceful somersault in the air, the cake shot out at an angle and landed soft side down on the very spot the guide had occupied a second before. That worthy, with wisdom born of experience, had shifted his base at the first motion of the frying-pan, and was now rolling on the ground in huge glee, his infectious laugh rolling through the camp.

Walter, his face crimson with more than

the heat of the fire, bit his lips in chagrin which he could not hide, but being blessed with a strong sense of humor he joined in the laugh and straightway prepared to try again. This time, under a running fire of comment and advice from Big Jim, who solemnly assured him that in his humble opinion "the landscape ain't really a-needin' blueberry frescoes t' improve its beauty," he succeeded in sending the cake into the air within catching distance of the pan, but it lacked the impetus to send it high enough to turn completely over, and fell back in the pan in a shapeless mass.

Big Jim cast an appraising eye at the batter kettle and, evidently considering that his chances of a square meal were in jeopardy, reached for the pan and gave Walter a practical demonstration. Holding the pan slanting in front of and away from him he gave it a couple of preliminary easy flaps to get the swing, then flipped boldly and sharply. It seemed the easiest thing in the world, and in fact it is when you know how. Returning the pan to Walter he had the latter go through the motions several times until he was satisfied.

Then he bade him pour in the batter and go ahead.

Slowly at first, then faster the bubbles broke to the surface. Presently the edges stiffened and with a little shake Walter felt that the cake was loose and free in the pan. Getting the preliminary swing he gave the pan a sharp upward flip and a second later the cake was back over the fire, brown side up.

The guide nodded approvingly. "Reckon yer goin' t' be a sure enough woodsman," he said. "Nobody what can't toss a flapjack has any business t' think he's th' real thing in th' woods."

Breakfast finished it fell to Walter to wash the dishes while the guide went out to look for deer signs. Cleanliness is next to godliness in camp as well as at home, and hot water is as necessary to wash dishes in the one place as in the other. Walter had finished his work and was hanging the towel to dry when he heard a queer noise behind him. Turning, he was just in time to see a bird about the size of a blue jay, but gray and white in color, making off with the cake of soap which he had left on a log.

Flying to the nearest tree it started to sample its queer breakfast. But one taste was enough. With a harsh scream, which was a ludicrous blending of disappointment, disgust and rage, it dropped the soap and vigorously wiped its bill on the branch on which it was sitting. Then scolding and protesting in a harsh, discordant voice, it flew to the next tree, stopping long enough to give the bill another thorough wiping on a convenient branch, only to repeat the performance on the next tree, and so on until it disappeared in the depths of the forest.

Walter laughed heartily, disgust was so clearly manifest in every motion of the bird and the torrent of invective being poured out was so very plainly aimed at him personally as the author of its discomfiture. The boy had never seen a bird of this species before, but he recognized it at once from its markings, the fine silky plumage and certain unmistakable characteristics in general appearance and actions, as a member of the jay family. It was, in fact, the Canada Jay, Perisoreus canadensis, first cousin to the blue jay, and a resident the year through of the north

woods, where it is often called the moose-bird.

Big Jim returned just in time to witness the last of the performance.

"Whisky Jack seems t' think yer ain't been usin' him just right, son," said he. "What yer been doin' t' rile him up so?"

Walter told him the incident of the soap, and the guide chuckled with enjoyment. "Serves th' old thief right," said he. "Why, I've had one of them fellers sit on my tent just waitin' fer me t' go out so's he could go inside an' steal somethin'. He'll swipe a meal out of yer plate while yer back's turned. Just th' same, it's kind o' sociable t' have him neighborly if yer happen t' be all alone in th' deep woods fifty miles from nowhar, 'specially in winter."

"Where did he get the name of Whisky Jack?" asked Walter.

"Don't know, son, unless it comes from an Indian name I heered a half breed in a Canada lumber camp use once. He called one o' these jays thet hed got caught tryin' t' steal th' bait from a mink trap he had set a 'whiskee-shaw-neesh.' When yer say it quick it

sounds something like 'Whisky John,' an' I reckon maybe thet's where th' trappers and lumbermen got th' name 'Whisky Jack.' Anyhow, thet's what they all call him. Ever see one before?"

"No," replied Walter, "but I knew it was a Canada Jay as soon as I saw it. You see I had read all about it in a bird book," slyly putting just the least emphasis on the word book.

Big Jim grunted and then abruptly changed the subject. "Been a-lookin' fer signs o' Mr. Peaked Toes, an' they ain't none too plentiful. If it was two months later I should say this country hed been hunted hard. I wonder now ——" he paused abruptly to gaze into the fireplace with an air of deep abstraction.

"What do you wonder?" asked Walter when the silence became oppressive.

Big Jim reached for his pipe. "I wonder," said he slowly as with his fingers he deftly transferred a hot coal from the embers to the bowl of his pipe, "I wonder if some o' them sneakin' low-lived poachers ain't been a-killin' deer out o' season right round these here parts. Durant's lumber camp has been

havin' a right smart lot o' fresh 'veal' all summer, an' some one's been supplyin' it. You an' me will have a look around on th' ridges this morning—take a kind o' census, mebbe. This afternoon we'll have another try at th' trout t' make up fer those Mr. Mink had fer breakfast."

While the guide exchanged his heavy boots for a pair of moccasins Walter slipped on a pair of sneaks, for he realized that this was to be a still hunt, the highest form of sportsmanship, a matching of human skill against the marvelous senses of the most alert and timid of all the animals that live in the forest. It was to be his first deer hunt, for the jacking expedition of the night before could hardly be dignified by the name of hunt, the advantage lying so wholly with the hunters. Now, however, the advantage would be reversed, lying wholly with the hunted, with ears trained to detect the smallest sound, suspicious of the mere rustle of a leaf, and with nostrils so acutely sensitive that they would read a dozen messages in the faintest breeze.

It was still early and Big Jim at once led the way to the foot of a series of low ridges

above a swamp that flanked one side of the pond, explaining as they went that deer are night feeders, coming down to the lowlands at dusk and spending the night in the swamps, and along the watercourses. "'Bout now they'll be workin' back t' higher ground, till along 'bout ten o'clock they'll be well up on th' hardwood ridges where they'll lay up fer th' day, snoozin' behind a windfall or thick clump o' evergreens. Then 'long 'bout four o'clock they'll git movin' agin, an' pretty quick begin t' work back t' low ground and a drink," said the guide.

"Now, pard," he continued, "yer watch them feet o' yourn, and put 'em down 'sif this here ground was made o' egg-shells. Look out fer twigs and dead sticks. Snap one o' 'em and it's good-bye Mr. Peaked Toes! When I stop jest you stop, freeze in yer tracks, till I move on agin. Guess yer larned yer lesson yesterday 'bout sudden movin'."

By this time they were skirting the foot of one of the ridges and Big Jim moved forward slowly, his keen eyes searching the ground for signs, and sharply scanning the thickets. It was wonderful to the boy a few feet behind

to note how without any apparent attention to where he was stepping each foot was planted surely and firmly without the rustle of so much as a leaf. It seemed as if the big moccasins were endowed with an intelligence of their own, and picked their way among the scattered litter of dead sticks without attention from the man whose huge form and heavy weight they bore so lightly.

Walter himself found that it required every bit of concentration of which he was capable to watch his path and at the same time keep an eye on his companion that he might be prepared to "freeze" should the latter stop suddenly. It was a nervous strain that rapidly became fatiguing in the extreme. He could not relax for an instant to look about him, lest in an unguarded moment there should be a fateful snap underfoot. He wondered if it could be possible that he would ever acquire that seemingly instinctive art of still walking which is inborn in the Indian and has become almost a sixth sense in the trained woodsman.

It was a relief when Big Jim suddenly stopped and pointed to a bit of soft ground

just ahead of them. There, clearly defined, were the V shaped imprints of sharp-edged little cloven hoofs. The guide studied them a moment.

"Doe crossed here within five minutes," he whispered.

"How do you know?" asked Walter, imitating the guide's guarded whisper.

"Know it's a doe by th' size." He stooped and pointed to a slight film of moisture on the edge of one of the prints and even as he did so a tiny particle of wet soil loosened and fell. Had more than five minutes elapsed the edges would have slightly dried out, and Walter was enough of a scout to realize this and understand the significance of what he saw. The guide scanned the side hill to the right.

"Watch that old windfall," he whispered.

Walter looked in the direction indicated and studied the tangle of fallen timber a hundred yards away, but for the life of him he could make out nothing that in any way resembled an animal. A slow smile dawned on the good-natured, sun-browned face watching him. Then slowly Big Jim stooped and

picked up a good-sized stick, which he broke in his hands with a sharp snap.

Instantly there was a startled whistle, followed by a sudden crash at one end of the fall, and Walter caught a glimpse of two slim reddish-brown legs and a white "flag" ridiculously like a magnified edition of the little bunch of cotton which had been his last glimpse of Brer Rabbit early that morning. There were two or three diminishing crashes beyond the windfall and then all was still.

Walter turned to look at the guide, whose mouth was broadly stretched in a hearty but noiseless laugh. "Did you see her all the time?" he whispered.

Big Jim nodded. "Sure," he replied. "Yer see, son, yer was lookin' fer somethin' thet wasn't thar—Mrs. Lightfoot right out on full dress parade like yer've seen 'em in a park, mebbe, and o' course yer didn't see her. Now I was lookin' fer jest a leetle patch o' red, which couldn't nohow be leaves at this season o' year, and I see it right away. Yer most generally see what you're lookin' fer—if it's thar. In the woods th' thing is t' know what t' look fer."

His face clouded suddenly as he continued. "I don't nohow like th' way she dusted out. If it was th' huntin' season I wouldn't think nothin' o' it. But it ain't, and she ought not t' hev run more'n a couple o' hundred yards afore she got so blamed curious thet she'd hev stopped and then come a-sneakin' back t' see what had given her thet sudden attack o' heart disease. She was sure scared, and she's been worse scared quite lately."

They resumed their tramp in the same cautious manner as before, finding several old tracks and two or three fresh ones, to none of which Big Jim gave more than a moment's attention. Then they ran across a trail which, from the size of the prints, Walter knew must have been made by a big buck. The guide wet a finger and carefully tested the direction of the wind, which was so faint as not to be perceptible to the dry skin. Satisfied that the trail led directly into the wind he started to follow it, explaining as they went along that had the trail led down wind it would have been useless to waste time following it, for the game would have scented them long before they were near it.

The course now led up to higher ground and only such trained eyes as the guide's could have picked it out. As they approached the top of the ridge Big Jim suddenly left the trail and made a wide détour to the left, then circled back to the top of the ridge, along which he led the way with the utmost caution, stopping at every step to study the landscape in front and below. Finally in the shelter of a young hemlock he stopped and nodded for Walter to join him.

"Look in thet thicket o' young hemlocks a couple o' hundred yards down from th' top o' the ridge," he whispered.

Walter looked as directed, but for a few minutes could make out nothing unusual. Then he recalled his lesson earlier in the day and looked for a "patch o' red." Almost at once he saw it, low down under the hemlocks, and by looking intently soon made out the form of the buck lying down in unsuspicious contentment.

"Foxy old Mr. Peaked Toes has been clear up on top o' th' ridge an' then doubled back and laid down whar he can watch his back

track," whispered the guide. "But we've fooled him this time."

For a few minutes they watched him. Then the hush of the great forest was abruptly broken by the alarm notes of a crow, so close at hand that Walter instinctively looked up, expecting to see the black mischief maker above their heads. But no bird was to be seen, and a glance at Big Jim's grinning face told him that the crow was none other than the guide himself.

When his glance once more returned to the buck it was to behold a lordly animal standing with his magnificent head, crowned with ten point antlers still in the velvet, thrown up, his sensitive nostrils testing the wind for trace of possible danger. For a few minutes he stood motionless, ears forward to catch the least sound, big soft eyes searching the hillside, delicate nostrils expanded and a-quiver in the effort to read some warning in the air. So the king stood, suspicious but not alarmed, a royal animal in the full vigor of maturity.

Satisfied that ears and eyes and nose could detect no danger, but still suspicious, he suddenly bounded behind the hemlocks, clearing

a fallen tree with a leap which was a marvel of lightness. The thicket shut him from their view, but presently Big Jim called Walter's attention to a slight movement of bushes far up along on the ridge.

"He's making a sneak t' high ground whar he can have a better look around. Then he'll make a big circle t' try the wind from all quarters. Did yer notice that scar on his shoulder? He's been burned thar by a bullet or had an ugly tear in a scrap with another buck. Son, you've seen th' King o' Lonesome Pond. I've tried fer him for th' last three years in th' open season, but th' old rascal knows as well as I do when th' huntin' season begins and he's too smart fer me. No walkin' up on him then like we did to-day! I'd like t' get him and yet—well, fact is I'd hate t' see him dead. He sure is a king! Now fer camp an' lunch an' then a try fer them trout. Son, yer'll make a still hunter one o' these days, and, son, don't yer never fergit thet still huntin' is th' only real sportin', square deal way o' huntin' deer."

These few words of approval from his companion amply rewarded the boy for his long

effort to "keep his feet in the way they should go" and now as they tramped rapidly toward camp he felt within him for the first time the sense of mastery and self-reliance which is ever the woodsman's best reward.

In the afternoon fishing Walter failed to equal his record catch of the day before, but nevertheless landed some handsome trout, and they soon had all they could use. After an early supper the guide led the way to a deer run only a short distance from camp, where, he said, the animals were in the habit of coming down to drink. Here at one side in a position to command an unobstructed view of a part of the run Walter set up his camera, masking it with branches broken from the surrounding trees. A flash was arranged to be exploded by an electric spark from two dry cells which had been brought along for the purpose. A stout thread was fastened across the run in such a way that an animal passing up or down must strike it and the adjustment was such that the least pull would make the necessary contact and set off the flash.

"Thar's a couple o' other runs close by, and

it's all a chance whether a deer will take this partic'lar run, but I think th' chance is good," said the guide.

Back at camp the guide put out the fire lest the smell of smoke should alarm the game. Then they sat down to wait, Big Jim whiling away the time with stories of hunting and adventure which set the boy's pulses to faster beating. Swiftly the shadows crept through the woods and dusk settled over the landscape. Through the tree tops Walter caught the gleam of the first star.

"Ought not t' be long now 'fore thar's somethin' doin'," said the guide.

Almost with the words the report of a rifle rang out from the lake in the direction of the run where the camera was set, and rolled in heavy echoes along the mountain. Big Jim was on his feet in an instant, his face contorted with rage, while he shook a brawny fist in the direction of the shot.

"You hound, I'd wring yer blasted neck fer two cents!" he muttered. Then he turned to Walter and shook his head sorrowfully as he said, "It ain't a mite o' use t'-night, son. Thet shot hit th' narves o' every deer within two

miles o' here. Might as well go bring in th' camera. I been sartin all day thet some such mischief as this was afoot. We didn't see half th' number o' deer we'd ought to this mornin' and them was so skeery thet I suspicioned they was bein' hunted right along. Guess when we git back t' Woodcraft we'll hev t' notify th' game warden and do a little still huntin' fer bigger game than Peaked Toes. Reckon I could guess who th' feller is, but I ain't got no proof, not a mite. If yer was t' leave thet picter box out all night yer might ketch one 'long just 'fore daybreak," he added as an afterthought.

Walter agreed to this, and they set about preparing for the night, when both were startled by a distant flare of light.

"The flash!" cried Walter joyously. "You guessed wrong that time, you old croaker!"

Big Jim's face was a study. "Reckon I did, pard," he drawled. "Must be one deer round these parts what is plumb foolish in her head. Well, we'll go bring in th' camera."

In a few minutes they reached the run. Sure enough the thread was broken and the

flash sprung. Walter at once slipped in the slide, and gathering up the apparatus they returned to camp, the boy in high spirits, but Big Jim in unwonted soberness.

CHAPTER X

A BATTLE FOR HONOR

REACHING Woodcraft late the next afternoon Walter at once hurried to the dark room adjoining Dr. Merriam's office to develop his plates. To his dismay he found that needed chemicals for fresh developer were lacking, and he was unwilling to risk his plates in the old and necessarily weak developer on hand. There was nothing for it but to possess himself in such patience as he could until a fresh supply could be obtained from the city. Dr. Merriam promised to send at once. Leaving Big Jim to report to the doctor the results of their trip Walter sought the wigwam.

He found Tug rewinding his split bamboo and Billy Buxby assisting with a ceaseless stream of unheeded advice.

"Behold the mighty hunter!" exclaimed Billy with an exaggerated bow of mock deference as Walter entered.

"What luck?" asked Tug, as he tied the final knot and reached for the shellac.

Walter rapidly sketched a brief account of his two days at Lonesome Pond, but in his enthusiasm over the deer hunt forgot to mention his double catch of trout. "Anything new here?" he asked finally.

Tug shook his head. "Nothin' much. Harrison came in with a three-pound brook trout this morning, and unless some one gets in to-night with something better that will give the Senecas the score for this week. Say, the gloom in this little old shanty is something fierce. If it was any one but Harrison there'd be no kick comin'. He's gettin' such a swelled head he can't see anybody outside his own tribe. I'd like to punch it for him," growled Tug savagely.

"Say," he added as he looked up, "what's the matter with you, you grinning Cheshire cat?"

"Nothing much," replied Walter, "only day before yesterday I landed a double, for a total of five pounds; brook trout, too."

Tug and Billy fell on him as one. "Say it again! Say it again!" begged Tug as they pinned Walter to the floor and sat on him.

"I got two trout at one cast, and they weighed five pounds. Does that beat it?" gasped Walter, giving up the struggle.

"Counts same as one fish," whooped Billy joyously.

"Well, we win anyway, for one of them weighed over three and a half," said Walter, giving a sudden heave that sent Billy sprawling. "Now what's the matter, you old gloom chaser?"

"Walt, you ain't foolin', are you? Tell me, you rabbit-footed tenderfoot, have you got proof?" implored Tug.

"Big Jim's word for it, and a photo," replied Walter.

Tug's face cleared. "That's good enough. Oh, my eye, wait till that record is posted tonight!" he chortled.

Tug was not disappointed. The record held, and the Delawares celebrated that night with a bonfire and war dance in which Walter, to his confusion, found himself the central figure. Harrison's chagrin was too evident to escape notice, and his defeat was rubbed in with a malice born of his growing unpopularity.

The next morning when Walter met him and offered his hand Hal passed on as if the other lad were a stick or a stone. The insult was witnessed by several Delawares and by members of Hal's own tribe. That night a meeting of indignation was held by the Delawares, and in spite of Walter's protest and the efforts of Woodhull and one or two of the older boys, it was voted to send Harrison to Coventry so far as the Delawares were concerned, that is, he was not to be spoken to or recognized in any way.

In his own wigwam Hal was only a degree less unpopular. The leaders tried to induce him to make an apology, pointing out to him that he was violating both the spirit and word of the Scout's oath, but the effort was without avail. The high-strung, undisciplined boy, accustomed from babyhood to having his own way, fawned upon by all with whom he had hitherto come in contact because of his father's great wealth, was utterly unable to adjust himself to the new conditions which surrounded him, to the democracy of which he was now a part yet of which he had no understanding. So he went his headstrong way,

and if in his heart were bitterness and misery he made no sign.

The Senecas stood by him with half-hearted loyalty because he was a fellow tribesman, but there was not one whom he could call a friend. So he became more and more isolated, spending his days fishing, the proudest, loneliest boy in all the big camp. The fact that he continued to score with big fish gave him a measure of standing with his tribe, and to maintain this became his chief object in the daily life.

Walter was thinking of this and wondering what the outcome would be as early one morning he headed his canoe for a setback some three miles from camp, which he had discovered the day before. The entrance was so hidden in a tangle of alders and brush that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could pick out the channel. He had passed the spot dozens of times without suspecting that anything lay beyond.

Patiently and carefully he worked his way through the tangle, once having to get out and lift the canoe over a jam of a dozen stranded logs. Beyond this the channel was compara-

tively clear. Unexpectedly it abruptly opened into a broad body of water perhaps half a mile long, deep in the middle, and with the upper end covered with an acre or more of lily-pads.

Walter's eyes sparkled. "Gee, I bet there's pickerel in here!" he exclaimed, unconsciously speaking aloud.

"Bet yer life thar is," said a voice with a chuckle.

Walter turned to find a rude raft anchored behind the half submerged top of a fallen hemlock, and on it sat Pat Malone, catching young striped perch for bait.

"Hello!" exclaimed Walter. "What are you doing here?"

"Seem ter be fishin'," replied Pat, a broad grin spreading across his freckled face.

Walter grinned in return. "Well, what are you catching?" he asked.

"Mostly fish—some skeeters," was the prompt retort.

Pat lifted a wriggling three-inch perch from the water. "Do you call that a fish?" asked Walter.

"Mebbe it is an' mebbe it isn't," said the lumber boy as he dropped the victim into a

battered old pail half filled with water. "How about this?" He reached behind him and held up at arm's length a huge pickerel.

Walter allowed a long low whistle of admiration escape him. "Are there any more like that in here?" he asked eagerly.

"Shure," replied Pat. "That's nothin' but a minnie 'longside some old whopperlulus in here."

"What'd you catch him with?"

"Bait an' a hook an' line."

Walter laughed. "Pat, you win," said he. "I don't want any of your secrets, but I should like to catch just one fish like that one."

A crafty look swept over the freckled face grinning across at him. "Yez licked me once."

Walter nodded.

"An' yez said that if iver yez had the chance yez'd show me some o' thim thricks what done it."

Again Walter nodded.

"Will yez do it now if Oi'll show yez where thim big fish is an' how ter ketch 'em?" asked Pat eagerly.

"I'll do it anyway, and you don't need to

show me anything about the fish," replied Walter heartily, driving the canoe ashore as he spoke.

Together they forced their way through the underbrush until they found a cleared place. "This isn't to be another fight?" asked Walter, a sudden suspicion flashing into his mind.

"Course it ain't! What kind av a low-down hedgehog do ye take me fer, anyway?" retorted his companion indignantly.

Walter put out his hand and apologized promptly, ashamed to think that he should have been guilty of entertaining such a thought. Then he began by briefly explaining the rules governing boxing, pointing out that a blow below the waist line constitutes a foul, that a man knocked down is allowed ten seconds in which to get on his feet again, and during that time must not be touched by his opponent; that wrestling is not allowed, and that matches usually are conducted by rounds of three minutes each, with a minute for rest in between.

"No true sportsman will ever hit a man when he's down," concluded Walter.

This was difficult for the backwoods boy to grasp, and it was equally hard for him to understand why in a fight he should not scratch, kick and gouge, even use his teeth if opportunity offered, for in his hard life in the lumber camps he had witnessed many a rough and tumble fight where ethics are unknown, and where fighting men sink to the level of fighting beasts, employing every weapon with which nature has endowed them, and giving no mercy to a fallen foe.

But Pat was blessed with a strong sense of fair play, and when he had fully grasped the meaning of the rules they appealed to him instantly. "'Tis jist a square deal both byes gits in a foight!" he exclaimed, a light breaking over his puzzled face.

Then Walter showed him a few of the simplest guards, how to parry an opponent's blow with one arm while countering with the other, how to protect the body with elbows and forearms while the hands shield the face, how to step inside, and how to duck under a swing, how, by watching his opponent, to anticipate the coming blow and be prepared to avoid it. Lastly he showed him the art of

side-stepping, the little shift of the feet which while keeping the body perfectly poised allows the blow to pass harmlessly to one side or the other, at the same time opening an opportunity to counter on the opponent.

Naturally quick, and with an Irishman's inborn love of battle, Pat picked up the points readily and when at the end of an hour Walter flung himself on the ground for a breathing spell Pat executed a double shuffle.

"Shure it be the greatest dancin' lesson av me loife!" he whooped joyously, side-stepping, ducking and lunging into empty space. "Come on, bye, come on! Oi can lick yez now! Come on, ye spalpeen! 'Tis Pat Malone will give yez the greatest lickin' av yer life!"

Walter declined with thanks, lying back weak from laughter, while the young giant continued to dance around sparring, ducking and countering on an imaginary foe. "'Tis meself will clane out the Durant camp before anither sun is up as shure as Oi be the eldest son av me mither," he chuckled, flinging himself beside Walter from sheer exhaustion.

When they had rested a bit Walter proposed that they go try the fish, and that Pat come

in his canoe. In an instant the young woodsman had forgotten his newly acquired accomplishments, for a new idea had suddenly possessed him.

"Tell me, bye, what's this about catchin' the biggest fish at Woodcraft Camp?" he asked eagerly.

Walter explained the contest fully, and told how eager he was to score over the Senecas.

"'Tis aisy," broke in Pat.

"What do you mean?" asked Walter, a bit puzzled.

Pat struck one side of his nose with a dirty forefinger and winked solemnly. "Oi wonder now, have yez forgot the big pickerel yez have lyin' down on the raft? 'Twill weigh ten pounds if it weighs an ounce."

"But that isn't mine!" exclaimed Walter. "It's yours."

"Is ut now?" said Pat, scratching his head. "Shure Oi disremimber ketchin' ut. Oi'm thinkin' yez must hev caught ut in yer shlape an' didn't know ut."

Walter laughed and thanked his companion heartily, while he refused the gift. Then seeing the look of hurt disappointment on Pat's

face he hastened to make clear why he could not accept the fish. "You see," he concluded, "a Scout's honor is always to be trusted, and it would not be honorable to try to win with a fish I did not catch myself. A man's honor is the greatest thing he possesses."

The other pondered this in silence for a few minutes trying to adjust his mind to a new idea. When he spoke it was slowly, as one feeling his way.

"Yez mane that ter score wid thot fish would be loike hittin' a man when he's down, or shtalin' from a blind pup."

"Exactly," replied Walter.

"An' do all the other byes feel the same way?"

"Of course they do."

"No they don't! Anyway, there's wan that doesn't."

"What do you mean?" cried Walter startled.

"Oi mane thot there's wan dirty blackguard has been winnin' points roight along wid Pat Malone's fish. Oi mane thot thot spalpeen thot yez call Harrison, the wan with his pockets lined with money, has been buyin'

me big fish fer the last mont' an' payin' me good money fer 'em. Oi mane thot if yez hadn't happened in here this marnin' yez moight hev seen him luggin' in thot big pickerel this very noight. 'Tis his last fish he's had from me, the low-down blackguard." Then he added ruefully: "Sure 'tis a glad day fer Pat Malone an' a sorry wan fer his pockets ter hev found out what honor manes."

The two boys returned to the canoe and spent the remainder of the morning in a vain attempt to land another big pickerel. When they parted it was with a mutual respect and liking and a promise on Walter's part to return the next day in quest of the big fellows. "Oi'm goin' ter hunt frogs fer bait this afternoon an' Oi'll be waitin' fer ye at sunup," were Pat's parting words.

It was a sober boy who paddled back to Woodcraft that afternoon. What he had learned that morning filled him with mingled feelings of contempt and gladness—contempt for the fellow Scout who had so perjured himself and violated his Scout's oath, and gladness that his faith in the unkempt boy of the woods had been so fully justified. Any lingering

doubt of Pat Malone's innocence of the theft of Mother Merriam's pin which he might have entertained had been banished by what he had learned of the boy that morning.

And in his own mind the boy was fighting a battle. Where lay the path of duty? What did his honor as a Scout demand of him? To go report what he had learned? To become a bearer of tales? The very thought was abhorrent to him! On the other hand had he any moral right to allow his fellow tribesmen to suffer through the dishonesty of which he held the proof? And Hal's own tribesmen, was it fair to them to allow them to profit by points to which, though no fault of theirs, they had no right?

It was a relief to see Harrison's canoe approaching the landing as he pulled his own out. He would put it up to Hal to do the square thing—redeem himself by playing the man for once.

"Hal," said Walter in a low tone as the other landed, "I know where you get your fish."

Hal turned and faced him. "What are you talking about?" he said roughly.

Walter flushed and instinctively his fists doubled, but he kept a check on his temper. "You have bought your record fish of Pat Malone," he said evenly.

It was the other's turn to flush, but he maintained his air of bravado.

"That's silly," he jeered.

"No it isn't, and you know it," replied Walter.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked the other sulkily, seeing that denial was useless.

"I don't know," replied Walter sadly. "Say, Hal, why don't you go own up to Dr. Merriam and ask him to try and put you right with the fellows?"

"What do you take me for? I'm in bad enough now. If you don't blab who's going to know it? And if you turn telltale I guess my word's as good as yours," sneered Hal.

"For two cents I'd punch ——" began Walter hotly, then pity for the unfortunate boy before him calmed him. "Hal, I'm not going to say anything to-night, anyway. Do the right thing. Remember your Scout's oath," he begged.

"Remember it yourself," growled Hal. "There's mighty little honor in telling tales." And with this parting shot he strode off to the wigwam.

Walter's preoccupation and sober face were bound to attract the attention of his mates, and he came in for a lot of guying.

"Who is she, Walt?"

"Is her papa a big chief?"

"Take us round and give us a knock-down, Walt."

"Romance of the big woods! Walt, the tenderfoot, falls in love with an Indian princess!"

Walter's replies to all these sallies were only half-hearted, and seeing that something was really amiss with him the boys dropped their banter. He retired to his bunk early, only to twist and toss uneasily all night long. Over and over till his brain grew weary he kept repeating the perplexing question, "Ought I to tell? Ought I to tell? Ought I to tell?"

The problem was no nearer a solution when in the gray of dawn he slipped a canoe into the water the next morning and turned her

bow toward the setback. Pat was waiting for him on the old raft and, true to his word, he had a pocket full of lively little frogs, which were giving him no end of trouble in their efforts to escape. Walter took him aboard, and they were soon skirting the lily-pads at the upper end.

Here Pat bade Walter rig his rod and, producing a lively green frog from his pocket, he impaled it on the hook by thrusting the barb through its lips, explaining that in this way the frog's swimming was not seriously interfered with. He then took the paddle and handled the canoe while Walter cast. The frog had hardly struck the water before there was a swirl at the very edge of a patch of lily-pads followed by a strike that made the reel sing. A couple of good rushes and then, as is the way with pickerel, the fish was brought alongside with hardly a struggle. Pat deftly scooped it into the canoe and killed it with a blow that broke its spine. It was fair for a beginning, weighing perhaps four pounds, and Walter prepared to try again.

For half an hour they worked along the pads, taking several smaller fish.

At length they approached an outlying patch of pads where the water was deep and black. Two canoe lengths short of it Pat stopped the canoe. Then he sorted over his remaining supply of frogs till he found one that suited his critical fancy. With this he rebaited Walter's hook. "Now, ye throw roight over ter the very edge o' thim pads, and don't ye be in no hurry," he commanded.

The first cast was short, but at the second attempt the frog landed with a spat at the very edge of the pads and began to swim vigorously in an effort to reach and climb up on them. Suddenly the water fairly boiled, and Walter all but lost his balance and upset the canoe, so sudden and vicious was the strike.

"Ye have him! Ye have him! Shure 'tis the king av thim all, an' 'tis mesilf that knows ut, for 'tis tree times thot the ould feller has walked off wid me line and hooks!" yelled Pat excitedly. "Don't let him get foul o' thim pads!"

Walter soon found that he had the fight of his life on to keep the wary old warrior in clear water, but inch by inch he worked the

fish away from the pads until finally he felt that the danger was past and that it was only a matter of time when the prize would be his. A few more heavy lunges, which threatened by the mere weight of the fish to break the slender rod, and the battle was over. Softly Pat slid his hand along till his stout fingers closed in the gills and the prize was in the canoe, where Pat speedily put an end to the snapping of its cruel looking jaws by severing the spinal cord with his knife.

Walter brought out his scales, and could hardly believe that he read them aright. "Thirteen pounds and a half!" he gasped.

"An' there's two av me hooks in his mouth, bad cess ter him," said the matter-of-fact Pat, deftly extracting his property.

Pat was for trying for another big fellow, but Walter had had enough for that morning. Besides, he was anxious to show his prize at camp, so reeling in his line they started for the mouth of the backset.

"Pat, did Harrison ever have much luck in here?" asked Walter.

Pat stared at his companion for a minute before he found speech. "What, do ye mane

ter tell me ye be thinkin' Oi iver showed him where Oi was ketching the fish he bought?" demanded Pat. "Not he nor any ither o' the Woodcraft byes knows about this setback. 'Tis lucky ye was ter be findin' the way in yer own self. Ye will kape ut ter yerself now, will ye not?"

Walter promised that he would.

"Say, bye, did ye tell the docther av the low-down thrick this Harrison has been afther playin'?" Pat suddenly inquired.

Walter confessed that he had not. Then in a sudden burst of confidence he told the Irish lad all about the dilemma in which he had become involved. "What would you do, Pat?" he concluded.

"Me? Shure Oi dunno at all, at all. Oi'm thinkin' Oi'd side-step," replied Pat, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"But that's the trouble, I can't side-step," responded Walter.

The freckled face of the woods boy sobered. "'Tis a quare thing, this honor ye be tellin' about, but Oi'm thinkin' 'tis a moighty foine thing too," he said. Then, his Irish humor rising to the surface, he added: "There be

wan thing Oi wud do; Oi'd knock the block clane off av that blackguard that's made all the throuble."

Walter laughed. "I'd like to," he confessed.

They were now at the entrance and setting Pat ashore Walter turned his canoe toward camp. His arrival with the big pickerel, to say nothing of the smaller ones, created a wave of excitement among the boys who were in camp, and great jubilation among the Delawares. It happened that Harrison was among those present.

"So," he sneered when no one was near, "you've tried the silver bait! How much did you pay for the bunch?"

Walter turned on his heel and walked away. All the joy of the day had vanished. He wanted to be alone to fight out to a finish the battle of honor. So immediately after noon mess he slipped away unseen, and sought the cool depths of the forest to find in the peace of the great woodland the solution of his difficulty.

Late that afternoon, his mind made up, he turned toward camp. As he approached he

became aware of an air of suppressed excitement about the camp. Buxby was the first to see him.

"Hi, Walt! Have you heard the news?" he shouted.

"No," said Walter. "What is it?"

"The Senecas' records have been wiped out; Harrison's been buying those fish," whooped Billy.

Walter's first thought was that Hal had done the right thing and had confessed, and a great load fell from his shoulders. But Billy's next words brought him up short.

"Pat Malone came in this afternoon and told the big chief that he'd been selling fish to Hal right along. Brought in what money he had left, and said he guessed it wasn't quite the square thing for him to keep it. What do you think of that?"

"What did the doctor do?" asked Walter.

"Told Pat that as he had sold the fish in good faith the money was his, especially as the camp had had the benefit of them. Then he called Hal in and paid him back all that he had given Pat. Then he wiped out from the Senecas' score all of Hal's records. Don't

know what he said to Hal, but the word's been passed that the incident is closed. Gee, but I'd hate to feel the way Hal must! I guess Pat's squared himself with the bunch on that pin business. A feller that would do what he did wouldn't steal."

After the first burst of indignation the feeling of the camp settled into contempt, mingled with pity, for the boy who had so besmirched his honor. No reference was ever made to his disgrace, but for the most part he was left severely alone, only a few, of whom Walter was one, endeavoring to hold out a helping hand. So the camp settled down to the usual routine once more.

CHAPTER XI

BUXBY'S BUNCOMBE

THE late afternoon sun shone warmly on a little clearing some two miles from Woodcraft. It flooded with soft golden light the scar on the face of the great forest which nature, ever abhorrent of the ugly, was trying to mask under a riot of fireweed and early goldenrod. Blackened stumps were half hidden under tangled canes of the red raspberry. In the more open places low bush blueberries carpeted the ground. At the upper end of the clearing two boys squatted beside the charred stump of a great pine.

"There he comes, Billy. Line's started again." whispered one.

"'Tain't a he, it's a she," replied Billy disgustedly. "Don't you know that all worker bees are females? Males don't make no honey; they're the drones." Billy was strong on facts, if weak on grammar. "There comes another and another right behind. They're making a mighty short flight. We must be

pretty close to the tree. Gee, Spud, I bet the eyes of some of the fellers will stick out when they see us luggin' in a barrel of honey!"

"Ain't got it yet," replied Spud sententiously. "That tree is sure out of bounds, too. What we goin' to do about that?"

"Go on," said Billy decidedly. "'Tain't far out, and I reckon the big chief won't say nothin' when he sees that honey. Gee, but this will score some for the Delawares!"

The two boys were Billy Buxby and Spud Ely. Billy had been responsible for what he called the "big idea," which was to line out a bee tree, and Spud had closed with it at once. With all his happy-go-lucky carelessness Billy was well versed in outdoor life and by his powers of observation was continually surprising even those who knew him best. Had he been less fun-loving and careless he might easily have been one of the trusted leaders among the younger boys of the camp. But Billy's impulsiveness was apt to lead him into situations bordering on the reckless. He was always dreaming of doing big things and inclined to act on the inspiration of the moent, heedless of consequences.

It is doubtful if another boy in camp had noticed that there were honey-bees working among the wild flowers. Billy had kept his discovery to himself until he had perfected a plan whereby to win laurels for himself and score for the Delawares. It would not have been Billy, however, not to have dropped mysterious hints of the great coup in woodcraft which he was about to pull off, and, as he was never taken seriously, it was soon dubbed "Buxby's buncombe" and became a standing joke.

Billy stood for all the good-natured chaff of his companions without a protest. In fact he rather encouraged it that his final triumph might appear the greater. He went about with an air of secrecy, and for one whole day was engaged in making a mysterious something of which he would allow no one a glimpse. This was nothing more or less than a bee box, made after a plan once shown him by an old bee hunter from whom Billy had learned many tricks in the gentle art of "lining" bees.

The box was a very simple affair, but admirably adapted to its purpose. It was made

from an old cigar box and was perhaps three inches square by three and one-half deep. Half-way down on one side Billy made a slit just wide enough to admit a piece of ordinary window glass cut to fit. Inside he tacked two little strips or guides on which the glass rested. When the glass slide was in place it divided the box into an upper and lower chamber. The cover had a half-inch hole in the middle with a piece of glass fastened over it on the inside. The whole thing was crude, but in a secret test Billy found that it answered his purpose fully. It was then that he took Spud Ely into his confidence and it was arranged that on the following afternoon they would give Billy's plan a try-out.

Preserving the utmost secrecy the two boys sought the old clearing, where Billy had previously assured himself that the bees were also at work. In the lower compartment he put a piece of bread on which he poured a liberal amount of syrup, a two-ounce bottle of which he had begged from the cook. Then he slipped the glass slide in place and was ready for business.

It was not long before his experienced eyes

singled out a honey-bee at work on a spray of goldenrod on the edge of the clearing. Approaching softly with the box in one hand and the cover in the other he held the box just beneath the busy little insect and gently brushed her into it with the cover, immediately clapping this in place.

"Gee, that was easy!" exclaimed the admiring Spud, who entertained a wholesome respect for all insects with stings.

"Pooh, that's nothin'! I've seen fellers pick 'em right up in their fingers. If you ain't afraid of bees they won't bother you none. They know when people are afraid of 'em and when they ain't," replied Billy.

The bee buzzed about angrily for a few minutes, but in her darkened prison presently quieted down, the boys taking turns at peeping at her through the glass in the cover. When she had taken to a quiet examination of her narrow quarters Billy very gently pulled out the glass slide. It did not take her long to discover the syrup and, forgetful of everything but the unexpected store of sweets, she was soon busy "loadin' up," as Billy expressed it.

Carefully he lifted the box and placed it on a convenient stump, then removed the cover. Presently, loaded with all she could carry, the bee took wing. Rising heavily she circled overhead once or twice to get her bearings, then shot away in a straight line across the clearing.

"Now what do we do, chase along after her?" asked Spud.

"Naw, wait for her to come back, you numskull," replied Billy. "And while we're waiting let's catch another."

This was soon done, and the second bee was liberated as the first had been. To the surprise of the boys this one took a direction at right angles to the course of the first.

"Great snakes!" exclaimed Billy excitedly. "These woods are full of bee trees!"

Spud glanced at the box and just then a bee disappeared within. "Another bee has found the syrup! I just saw it go in!" he exclaimed, becoming more and more excited.

"'Tain't another one; it's the first one come back, just like I told you she would." Billy peeped into the box. "I thought so," he added; "she's brought another bee with her.

When they go back they'll bring some more till the whole darn hive knows just where this little old box is."

It was even as Billy said. Presently the bees were clustering thick around the box and were continually arriving and departing, forming a double line straight to the hive in the hollow heart of some forest giant beyond the clearing. In the meantime the second bee had carried the good news home and rallied a force of workers, so that soon two lines were established.

"What will we do, split up and you follow one line while I follow the other?" asked Spud.

"How do you expect to follow the line if you ain't got the box? Think a bee's goin' to take you by the hand and lead you?" asked Billy sarcastically, forgetful that this was a wholly new experience to Spud. "We'll stick together and work out the first line, and then if we have time we'll try the other."

He drew out his knife and blazed the stump on which the bee box sat. Then squatting down he carefully sighted along the second line of bees and cut a rough arrow with the

point indicating the exact line of flight. "Now," said he, "we can come back any old time and run down that line."

He next sighted along the line they proposed to follow out first till his eye encountered a slender young spruce on the far side of the clearing. With this for a marker he slipped the cover on the box while several bees were within, and taking it with him walked straight to the tree he had sighted. On the nearest stump he placed the box and removed the cover. At once several laden bees reëstablished their bearings and started for home. It was the quick return of one of these which had drawn from Spud the exclamation exposing his ignorance of the sex of working bees.

The northern edge of the clearing marked "bounds" in that direction for the camp, and only by special permission might the boys go beyond. Spud, less reckless than Billy, or at all events less certain that even a "barrel" of honey would buy Dr. Merriam's pardon for deliberate infraction of the rules, hesitated.

"Let's give it up now, and run the line out to-morrow," he suggested. "We can tell the

big chief and get his permission to go out of bounds."

Billy balked. "Oh, you quitter!" he growled. "Look at that line runnin' now and you talkin' about givin' it up! Say, Spud, I picked you to come in on this with me 'cause I thought you had some sand. You can go on back, but I'm goin' to find that tree! It can't be more'n a little ways in anyway, the bees are making such a short flight. Anyhow, who's going to know if we do go out of bounds? We can find the tree and then to-morrow ask permission to go out of bounds. Then we can open up the tree and get the honey."

The excitement of the hunt led Spud to lend an all too willing ear to Billy's argument. "All right," he growled, "I'm with you, but let's hurry up and get back."

Imprisoning some bees as before they once more moved forward and after a short advance into the woods stopped to reëstablish the line. This time the bees were back so quickly that Billy knew that the tree was close by, but the trees were so thick that it was difficult to watch the bees and the amateur hunter was

afraid that by continuing to advance along the line they might pass the tree without seeing it.

He therefore stationed Spud by the box and himself went forward along the line of flight as far as Spud could see him, where he blazed a tree. Returning he took the bee box with some captives and started off at right angles. At about one hundred and fifty yards he stopped, set his captives free and soon had a line started from that point.

The locating of the tree was now simply a matter of each boy moving forward along his line and where the two lines intersected the tree would be found. They met at the foot of a huge pine. Some fifty feet from the ground was a long gray strip from which the bark had fallen away, denoting dead wood and a probable hollow. Studying this carefully they finally made out a hole just beneath the stub of a dead branch, and circling near this some tiny specks which Billy promptly pronounced bees.

"We've got it!" he whooped joyously. "We've got it! Who says there isn't some class to us as scouts?"

"Bet that hollow comes half-way down the tree. Must be a ton of honey in it," said Spud examining the tree critically. "What you goin' to do, Billy?"

"Goin' up to have a look at it," said Billy, taking off his coat.

"Aw, quit your kiddin'; you can't climb that!" replied Spud.

Billy pointed to a young spruce growing close to it. "I can climb that, though," said he, suiting the action to the word.

"Well, hurry up," growled Spud. "It's gettin' darker'n blazes, and we'll be in a pretty pickle if we don't get out of here mighty quick."

In the excitement the boys had lost all track of time and the shadows had begun to steal upon them unawares. Up above it was still bright, but in the hollows it was already dusk.

Billy had reached a point where he could see the entrance clearly. A few belated stragglers were hurrying home with the last of the day's spoils. Extending down from the entrance was a crack which widened slightly just opposite Billy's position, and

through it he got a glimpse of weather-stained comb. The temptation was too great to be resisted. Working out on a branch of the spruce he managed to reach over to the tree and with his knife split off a sliver on one side of the crack. Then things happened.

Spud, impatiently waiting below, was startled by a wild yell. He looked up to see Billy descending at a rate that at first led him to think that the boy had lost his balance and was falling. In fact he was literally dropping from branch to branch. How he did it he never could tell. The last twenty feet he dropped clear, landing with a thump that for a minute knocked all the wind out of him.

Spud, genuinely concerned, hastened over to him and then for the first time realized what had happened. Billy had not come down alone. A sharp pain beneath one eye admonished Spud of the fact, and another on his chin drove the fact home. Yes, Billy had company, and the company was fighting mad.

Spud reached for Billy's jacket and wildly fought the enemy, while Billy scrambled to

his feet. Then, heedless of direction, they fled, their one thought to get as far as possible from the wrath which was being visited upon them. Crashing through the underbrush, falling over mouldering logs, barking their shins, bumping into trees in the fast gathering dusk, they ran till breath gave out.

The pursuit had been short, for the approach of night dampened the ardor of the avenging insects, and the hive had quieted down long before the boys stopped running. When finally they did stop and were convinced that they had nothing more to fear from the hot-tempered little fighters, they sat down to take account of injuries. Billy had been stung in half a dozen places on the face, four places on his hands and three on his legs. Spud had fared better, having but half a dozen in all, the most painful being the one beneath the eye, which was already puffed and swelling rapidly. Billy was considerably bruised from his fall from the tree, and Spud had scraped the skin from one shin.

Spud's concern for Billy, excited by the latter's fall, had given place to righteous

wrath. "A pretty bee hunter you are!" he sputtered. "What in blazes was you trying to do anyway? I've a good mind to punch your head for getting me into this mess."

He advanced threateningly. Then Billy's pathetic appearance, with his bruised and swollen face, cooled his wrath as suddenly as it had blazed up.

"I guess you've got yours all right, all right, and don't need nothin' more," he muttered. "Now let's get out of here. This blamed eye of mine will be closed tight pretty quick. Gee, how those little duffers can sting!"

Billy had "got his." There was no doubt about that. The stings were paining him acutely and he was stiff and sore from his bruises. But underneath his happy-go-lucky, careless disposition was the stuff from which true manhood is built. It showed now.

"Spud," he said slowly, "it's my fault all the way through. It's my fault that we came out of bounds, and it's all my fault that we got stung. I'm sorry, and when we get back to camp I'm going straight to the big chief and tell him that I'm to blame."

"'Tain't your fault no more'n mine,"

growled Spud. "Come, get a move on. Which way do we go?"

Billy looked up startled, to see the same look reflected in Spud's face. For the first time the boys realized that in their mad flight they had given no thought to direction. Neither had the remotest idea of where the camp lay or even the direction of the bee tree. And for the first time they had become aware of how dark it had grown.

"Billy, we're lost!" whispered Spud, a look of panic in his face.

CHAPTER XII

LOST

THE test of manhood is the ability to meet an emergency squarely, to put fear one side, think clearly and act sanely. The man who does not know fear may make no claim to bravery. Courage he may possess, courage that may lead to mighty deeds, but the spirit of true heroism is not his until he has tasted of the bitterness of fear and conquered it.

Of the two boys sitting with blanched faces under the first shock of realization that they were indeed lost in the great forest, with night fast closing in, Spud was some two years the older, stocky in build, well muscled, apparently fitted in every way to be the leader. Billy, on the other hand, was rather under size, wiry, quick moving, with the activity of nervous energy, and highly imaginative. The sudden fear that whitened Spud's sun-browned face clutched at Billy's heart as well and prompted him to leap to his feet and plunge after Spud in response to the latter's

panic shaken, "Come on! We better keep going, and maybe we'll come out somewhere!"

For a few minutes they tore along in frantic haste. Then Billy showed the stuff of which he was made. "Stop, Spud!" he yelled sharply.

It was the voice of authority. It cut through the terror of the fleeing boy in front and brought him up short. Billy had taken command. He began to speak rapidly.

"We're a couple of idiots. This ain't goin' to get us nowhere unless it's into more trouble, maybe. We're doin' just what always gets lost people into trouble and gets 'em more lost. The thing to do is to sit down and talk it over and try to decide just what we ought to do. Pretty Scouts we are, running like a couple of silly hens at the first scare! Wonder what the big chief would say if he could see us, after all the lectures he's given on what to do when you get lost. Here we are, and the question is, What are we going to do about it? What do you say?"

"I—I don't know," confessed Spud miserably. He was shaking a bit. "They'll send out searching parties when we fail to show up

to-night. Do you s'pose they'll come over this way?"

Billy made a wry face that instantly resolved into a grimace of pain because of his swollen features. "No, I don't," he replied. "You see I let some of the fellers think that we was goin' over toward Old Baldy, and you know some of 'em saw us start out on the Baldy trail. They'll go huntin' over that way. Spud, we might just as well make up our minds right now that we've got to spend the night in the woods. In the mornin' we can shin up a tall tree and p'raps get our bearings. What we want to do now is to make ourselves as comfortable as we can, and the first thing I'm goin' to do is to get some mud."

"Mud! What for?" asked Spud in surprise.

"To plaster on these blamed stings," replied Billy. "Jerusalem, how my face aches! Just a little bit back there we came across a swampy place. Come on and see if we can find it."

Retracing their steps in the direction from which they had made their last mad flight they soon found the place Billy had noticed.

With hasty fingers he dug up the wet black muck and plastered it thick over his swollen face and on his hands and legs. Somewhat gingerly Spud followed his example. The cool, moist plasters brought almost instant relief, and with the easing of the smarting wounds a measure of steadiness returned to the shaken nerves. Spud even so far forgot his fears as to grin as he looked at Billy.

"Gee, you are a sight! Say, the fellows wouldn't do a thing if they could see you now! The wild man of Borneo would be a beaut 'side of you."

"Can't have much on you," replied Billy. "That eye of yours looks as if it was about closed up, and mud ain't becoming to your style of beauty. Now let's make camp before it gets so dark we can't see nothin'."

"Where'll we make it, right here?" asked Spud.

"No," replied Billy decidedly. "It's too wet. We've got to get on higher ground."

He stooped and began to make a big ball of mud.

"What's that for?" demanded the puzzled Spud.

"First aid for the injured. These beauty plasters are goin' to dry out pretty quick and we'll want some fresh ones. You'd better bring along some too," replied Billy briefly.

The advice seemed good, and Spud followed Billy's example. Then they pushed on for drier ground, Billy in the lead. Already his active imagination had seized upon their predicament as savoring of real adventure. He pictured their return to camp the next day as heroes rather than culprits who had disobeyed one of the most stringent rules of the camp. He saw himself the center of admiring groups of his fellows because of his superior scoutcraft in knowing just what to do and how to do it in so severe a test as spending a night lost in the woods. The anxiety which would be caused by their absence never entered his head, or if it did was dismissed as of little consequence. He would show them that he was a real Scout, able to take care of himself under any conditions.

Presently they became aware that the ground was gradually sloping up. It was firm and dry under foot. By this time it was

so dark that it was with difficulty they could make out their surroundings. In front of two trees standing some ten feet apart Billy stopped.

"We'll camp here," he said.

Carefully putting his precious ball of mud at the foot of one of the trees he singled out a tall two-inch sapling. "Here, Spud, you bend this over as far as you can," he commanded.

"What for?" asked Spud.

"Never you mind; just get busy!" replied Billy.

By this time Spud had accepted Billy's leadership without question and he meekly obeyed. With his stout scout knife Billy made a straight cut across the sapling at the point where the strain was greatest. The strained fibers of the wood yielded to the first pressure of the keen blade and in less than half a minute he had the tree in his hands with a clean square cut base.

"You can cut down a big tree with a penknife if you can only bend the tree over far enough," said he as he trimmed the sapling. When he had finished he had a pole perhaps twelve feet long. Fishing some stout twine

from one of his capacious pockets he lashed the pole firmly to the two trees about six feet from the ground.

"Now hustle and get a lot of sticks 'bout ten feet long," he commanded.

These were not so easily obtained, but by dint of much feeling around and effort on the part of the two boys enough sticks and young saplings were secured to answer Billy's purpose. These were arranged with butts on the ground and other ends supported on the cross-bar between the two trees, all slanting evenly in the same direction.

"Now heap up all the brush and leaves you can scrape up," commanded the young architect, bringing up an armful of spruce boughs he had obtained from a near-by windfall. Thatched in this way the rude lean-to was soon completed. It was a rough but effective shelter, and with a few balsam boughs spread on the ground beneath it Billy felt that they could spend the night with a reasonable degree of comfort.

"Now if we only had a fire this wouldn't be half bad," he muttered. "Got any matches, Spud?"

"What do you take me for? You know the rules," growled Spud.

Billy knew. Matches were absolutely tabooed in Woodcraft Camp, that there might be no chance of a forest fire from the carelessness of just such reckless youngsters as Billy.

"Wish I'd brought my fire stick," grumbled Billy.

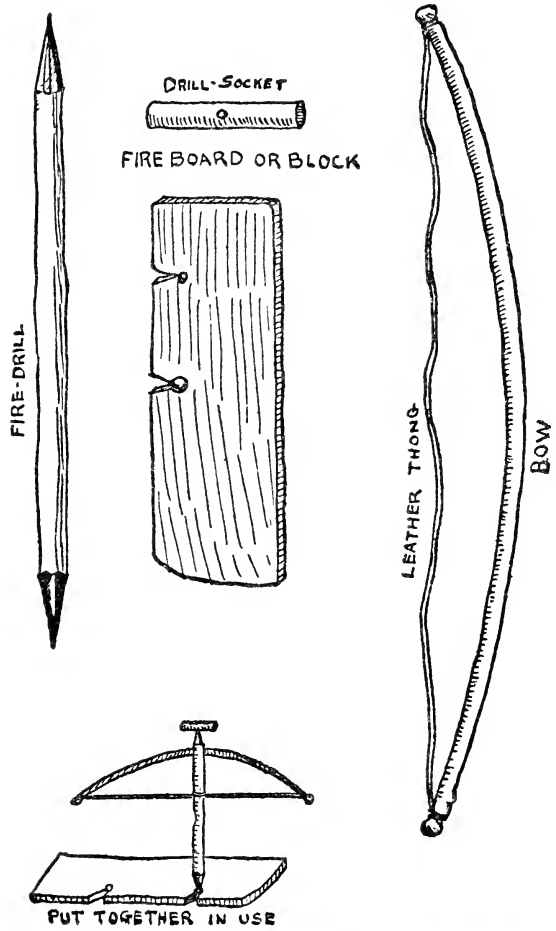
"I've got mine," said Spud.

"What! You blink-eyed owl! Why didn't you say so before?" whooped Billy. "Trot it out!"

The cautious Spud demurred. "You know the rules, Billy, and that building a fire without permission means expulsion," he protested.

"Expulsion nothin'!" replied Billy. "Do you s'pose the big chief's goin' to fire us for keepin' from freezin' to death? We'll be 'bout frozen by morning without blankets nor nothin'. Here, you give it to me. You needn't have anything to do with makin' the fire. I'll make it, and tell the doctor so when we get in. There ain't any danger, 'cause one of us will be on watch all the time."

Reluctantly Spud produced from an inner



BILLY'S APPARATUS FOR MAKING FIRE

pocket a little block of wood having in the middle a shallow pit, already charred with use. From this pit a V shape groove extended to the edge. From around his neck under his coat he unslung a small bow having a slack leather thong for a string. With this was a straight stick pointed at both ends. Lastly he brought forth a small oval piece of wood having a shallow pit in the center, and a little bag of finely ground cedar bark.

All of these things he turned over to Billy. The latter first carefully cleared the ground of all leaves and rubbish for a considerable space in front of the shelter. He then felt around until he had gathered a little bundle of dry twigs and some shreds of bark from a fallen birch near by.

Resting the block of wood or fire-board on a piece of bark he ordered Spud to hold it steady. Taking up the straight stick already mentioned he rested one pointed end in the hollow of the fire-board, looped the bow thong around it and, fitting the oval piece to the upper end of the straight stick by means of the hollow in the center, he was ready for business Holding the oval piece in his left hand

he bore down lightly, at the same time grasping the bow in his right hand and moving it rapidly back and forth. This caused the straight stick or drill, as Scouts call it, to revolve rapidly.

It was too dark to see, but almost at once the boys smelled smoke, and a few seconds later a tiny coal glowed on the piece of bark on the edge of which the fire-board rested. Dropping his tools Billy picked up the piece of bark, and covered the coal with cedar bark from Spud's bag, while he gently blew upon it. The bark was really tinder, prepared as the Indians prepared it before ever the white man brought his own first crude fire-making methods to startle the Red Men. The smoke increased in volume. A tiny flame flickered, disappeared, flickered again, then hungrily licked at the edge of a strip of birch bark that Billy held to it.

Hastily setting down the piece of bark holding the tiny fire he arranged the dry twigs over it in a loose pile and had the satisfaction of seeing the blaze leap up merrily. Larger sticks were laid over the pile, and in a few minutes the dancing flames were making a

circle of cheerful light that flooded the lean-to with warmth and cast weird shadows among the trees.

By the light from the fire the boys were able to gather a supply of wood wherewith to keep it going through the night and under its cheering influence their spirits rose wonderfully.

"If we only had something to eat ——" began Billy.

"Shut up!" interrupted Spud. "I'll be chewin' pine-needles in a few minutes."

Billy had a sudden inspiration. Fishing the bee box from his coat pocket he extracted the piece of syrup-soaked bread with which it had been baited and eyed it critically. "There's just half a bite apiece, and a swallow of syrup for each of us in the bottle," said he. "Shall we have it now or wait till morning?"

"I wouldn't trust you with it till mornin'. We'll have it now," grunted Spud.

The night had settled down still, and with a chill in the air that made the warmth of the fire very welcome. Beyond the zone of the firelight a wall of blackness hemmed them in. Now that camp had been made and there

was nothing to do but wait for daylight the loneliness of their situation weighed upon their spirits. They drew closer together on an old log which they had drawn before the fire for a seat. Suddenly Billy raised a warning hand.

"What is it?" whispered Spud, edging a bit nearer.

"I thought I heard a shot," replied Billy.

With straining ears the boys sat and waited what seemed an interminable length of time before they caught the faint sound of three shots fired in quick succession. Spud sprang to his feet.

"They're lookin' for us, Billy. Let's give 'em a yell," he cried.

First one, then the other, then both together they yelled at the top of their lungs until their throats were strained and raw. Then they realized the futility of wasting breath in this way.

"'Tain't no use, not a bit. May as well save our breath. We can't hear those shots plain enough to tell what direction they come from, so of course nobody can hear us," said Billy, disconsolately resuming his seat by the fire.

For a while they heard shots from time to

time, and somehow they brought a certain amount of comfort. It seemed less lonely to know that others were abroad in the forest looking for them, even though they were miles away. But the shots ceased finally, and the brooding mystery of the night settled over and took possession of them. They said little, but sat absorbed each in his own thoughts or listening to the strange sounds and uncanny voices of the night.

A pathetic picture they presented had any one been there to see, huddled together on the old log, their swollen, mud-smeared faces still further distorted by the uncertain flicker of the firelight. A stick snapping off in the darkness produced an answering jump in overwrought nerves, and the sudden scurry of a rabbit brought a startled "What was that?" from Spud.

Presently the physical strain and excitement they had been under began to tell, and despite their strange surroundings both boys began to nod, while the fire died down to glowing embers. It was then that some evil genius prompted a great horned owl to take up his watch on a dead pine not fifty feet

away and startle the woodland with his fierce hunting call:

"Whooo-hoo-hoo, whoo-hoo!"

The sleepers awoke in a panic, frantically clutching each other. "D-d-did you hear that?" whispered Spud, his teeth chattering.

As if in reply again the fierce hunting call rang through the woods:

"Whooo-hoo-hoo, whoo-hoo!"

Billy gave vent to a hysterical little laugh of relief. "Nothin' but an owl," said he as he heaped more wood on the fire. "He certainly got my goat that first time, though. Say, Spud, we're a couple of ninnies to both be sittin' out here asleep. What'd we build that lean-to for? You turn in there and sleep for a couple of hours and then you watch and I'll sleep. Ain't any need of either of us keepin' watch so far as any danger is concerned, I s'pose, for there's nothin' in these woods to harm us, but we ought not to leave the fire burnin' without some one to watch it."

This was sound advice, and Spud stretched out on the fragrant balsam boughs in the lean-to and soon was sound asleep. Billy began his lonely vigil. At first it was easy

enough to keep awake. Later an almost irresistible drowsiness took possession of him, and it was only by tramping back and forth or hunting fire-wood within the circle of light from the fire that he managed to keep awake. At the end of two hours he roused Spud, and wearily threw himself in the latter's place on the balsam bed.

It seemed to him that he had hardly closed his eyes when he felt Spud shaking him. "Go 'way," he murmured sleepily. "What you waking me up now for?"

"It's your turn again to watch," Spud growled, unceremoniously hauling Billy off the boughs.

If it had been hard and lonely work before it was doubly so now. It was past midnight, at the hour when vital forces and courage are at their lowest ebb. Billy was stiff and sore. Every movement was painful. He had never felt so utterly miserable in all his life. As he afterward expressed it, every bit of sand had run out.

He piled fuel on the fire, and then sat down on the log and gave himself over to his misery. How long he had sat there he could not tell

when he was brought out of a semi-drowse by a slight noise back of the lean-to. In an instant he was wide awake, straining his ears for a repetition of the sound.

The fire had burned low and the circle of light had narrowed to a faint glow of but a few feet in diameter. Billy held his breath. Had he imagined it? No, there was a rustle of leaves back of the lean-to. Something was moving there. Then there followed a decided and pronounced sniff! Billy felt his scalp prickle as if each individual hair was rising on end. With a wild yell he grabbed a glowing ember from the fire and hurled it in the direction of the sound. There was a startled "whoof," and the sound of a heavy animal lumbering off through the brush.

Spud came tumbling out of the lean-to white and shaky. "For heaven's sake, Billy, what's the matter?" he gasped.

Billy's teeth were chattering so that he could hardly speak. "I—I—I th-think it wa-was a bear," he finally managed to get out.

"Go on, what you givin' us!" said Spud.

Billy had by now so far recovered himself that he could give a connected account of what he had heard, and both agreed that their visitor could have been nothing less than bruin. Needless to say there was no more sleep for either that night. They piled fresh fuel on the fire and kept watch together, starting nervously at the smallest sound.

It was with a sigh of profound relief that they noted the gray of dawn stealing through the trees, and with the coming of the light their spirits rose perceptibly.

"What shall we do now, make a break out of here?" asked Spud when day had fairly broken.

"Not on your tintype!" replied Billy. "I'm lost all I'm goin' to be. You get busy and build another fire over there about fifty feet. When it gets goin' good heap on a lot of green leaves and rotten wood to make a smoke. I'll do the same thing with this fire. There ain't a breath of wind; those two smokes will go straight up, and you know two smokes means 'lost.' Some one will be up at the lookout on the top of Old Scraggy the first thing this morning, and he'll see the smokes.

Then he'll get word to camp and a party will come out and find us."

Wise Billy. He had decided upon just the right course of action. After the return of the unsuccessful searching parties Dr. Merriam had spent an anxious night. Before daybreak he had dispatched Seaforth with one of the guides to the top of Old Scraggy. They had seen the signal smokes at once and heliographed the location of them to camp. A party led by Big Jim and Louis Woodhull had started immediately, and as soon as they reached the clearing where the boys had begun their bee hunt they saw the smoke lazily curling above the tree tops about a mile beyond.

Firing signal shots and stopping every few minutes to send a whoop ringing through the woods they pushed on and presently, guided by answering whoops from the two victims, found the camp.

"Mother of saints!" exclaimed Big Jim as he caught a glimpse of the swollen and mud-stained faces of the two boys.

Billy smiled feebly, for the effort was painful. "We found a bee tree," he said.

"Found a bee tree! Found a bee tree!" echoed the guide. "'Pears to me thet them bees did some findin' on their own account."

Then seeing what really pitiful condition the two youngsters were in he called an abrupt halt to all jollying by the rescuers and at once prepared for the return to camp. One of the party was sent on ahead to relieve the doctor of his worry, and the rest slowly worked their way out, for Billy was too stiff and sore to hurry much.

At the first brook a halt was made and the faces of the two victims were tenderly bathed and made a little more presentable to enter camp. Billy's volatile spirits were already back to normal. He was full of the bee tree and the bear and already laying plans for getting the honey.

At mention of the bear Big Jim smiled. "Folks thet git lost in th' woods most generally meet up with a bar," he remarked dryly. "Didn't give yer a lock o' his hair fer a soovineer, did he, son?"

Billy tried to make a face at the guide, but winced with pain. "I tell you there *was* a

bear, and he came right up to our lean-to," he sputtered indignantly.

And so they came into camp where in front of the office Dr. Merriam stood gravely awaiting them.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HONEY SEEKERS

Two very sober boys came forth from their interview with the big chief. It was not that their punishment for infraction of the two most rigidly enforced rules of the camp—jumping bounds and building fires—was to be so severe. In fact they were getting off much lighter than they had dared to hope for, being ordered to police camp for one month and also being denied the privilege of joining any of the various special parties going out with the guides for two and three day trips. Dr. Merriam considered that their experience had been in the nature of punishment, severe enough to warrant him in being lenient in his dealings with the culprits.

He had simply talked to them, quietly, kindly, with no shadow of resentment, no suggestion of scolding. It was just a plain talk as man to man, in which the doctor made clear to them how the welfare of all is wholly

dependent upon the individual, and that the breaking of laws made for the community in no way harms those in authority, but is an outrage upon the great body politic and in time is bound to react upon the lawbreaker.

"The honor of Woodcraft Camp as a whole is to be safeguarded only by keeping unsullied the honor of each individual member. By your acts of deliberate disobedience yesterday you not only besmirched your own honor as Scouts under oath, but you blotted the honor of the entire camp. Buxby, by your own confession you have sought to take upon your shoulders the entire blame for this unfortunate affair. The motive does you credit. But, my boy," he concluded, turning to Spud, "I want you to realize that weakness which allows one to follow another in wrong-doing is quite as blameworthy as the act of the leader, and that therefore I hold you equally culpable with Buxby in this affair."

His face lighted with one of his rare smiles. "I believe that from now on I can trust both of you implicitly," he said, giving each the Scout's grip.

"The thing that hurts me most is the fact

that the big chief won't let the findin' of that bee tree score for the Delawares. There's fifty points thrown away just because I wouldn't take your advice, Spud, and wait till we got permission to go out of bounds," said Billy, as half an hour later the two boys sat at one end of the mess table making up for their prolonged fast.

Spud stopped a huge slice of bread and butter half-way to his mouth. "What about that second line we ain't run down yet?" he asked slowly.

Billy stared at him for a minute, then suddenly choked over the cup of hot cocoa he was drinking. When he had recovered his breath a broad smile lighted his battered face.

"Spud, old Scout, we win!" he exulted. "Here's where we beat the big chief after all! Why didn't I think of it before? It's as easy as picking up chips at a wood-pile. We haven't said a word about that second line. We won't, except to Woodhull. We'll take him along and run that line clear to bounds. Then we'll show Louis how to use that bee box, and let him go on and find the tree. You know there

are no bounds for the tribe leaders. Fifty points for the Delawares —— Oh, my lucky stars!" Billy finished with a whoop that brought the cook running to see what the trouble was.

In the meantime Dr. Merriam was having a conference with Big Jim at the headquarters. "I tell yer, doctor, thet leetle scatterbrain hev got more woods sense than three-fourths o' th' rest o' these youngsters put together. Wish yer could see thet camp o' theirn. Couldn't 'a' built it no better myself. An' then he had sense enough t' stick right thar and send up them smoke signals. If he only hed th' level top piece o' thet youngster thet went in t' Lonesome with me he'd hev th' makin' o' one o' th' best leaders in camp, even if he did hear a bar." The big guide chuckled.

"So you don't take any stock in the bear?" asked the doctor.

"Not th' least leetle mite," replied Jim. "Folks thet's lost allers hears bars or wildcats. I been watchin' out some sharp an' I ain't see no sign o' bar nigher'n ten mile o' this camp in th' last three years."

"Where did those bees come from?" asked the doctor.

"Feller thet lived in this camp th' summer 'fore yer bought it had a couple o' hives. Guess some o' 'em must hev got away from him. Thet youngster cert'nly did run 'em down slick. Hadn't never noticed th' leetle honey bugs myself."

The doctor smiled. "I had," said he, "and I had intended to line them out some day, but Billy got ahead of me, and as you say, he certainly did the trick very cleverly. The thing that pleases me, however, is the fact that he was observing enough to notice them. I don't believe that there is another soul in camp beside myself who had discovered them. Jim, that boy has got the right kind of stuff in him. We've got to take him in hand and develop his bump of caution and sense of responsibility."

"If he could run with young Upton fer a while ——" began the guide.

"The very thing I had in mind," interrupted the doctor. "When Buxby's period of probation is over I think we'll have to plan a trip for you with those two youngsters, one

that will put them on their mettle. It will be an interesting experiment. What do you think about opening that bee tree?"

The guide grinned. "A leetle honey would kind o' sweeten things up some," he ventured.

"All right," replied the doctor. "Be prepared to take a small party in to get it day after to-morrow."

Big Jim's "honey party," as he called it, was drawn wholly from the Delawares, in honor of the tree having been discovered by members of that tribe. It included Woodhull, Tug Benson, Upton and Chip Harley. Billy and Spud were denied the privilege of going out of bounds, so could go no farther than the edge of the old clearing. Spud announced that he had had enough of bees anyhow, and chose to stay in camp. But Billy was heart-broken. However, he was fair minded enough to admit to himself that he deserved all that was coming to him, and hiding his chagrin led the expedition to the old clearing and gave the guide the line from the stump on the upper edge. He watched the others disappear into the woods in single file

and then sat down to possess himself in such patience as he could until they should return. He had no doubt of their success in locating the tree and as Big Jim was no novice at cutting bee trees, he anticipated no trouble on that score. All the party wore gloves and carried mosquito netting to protect faces and necks from the maddened bees. In fact both Tug and Chip had their veils on when they entered the woods. The guide carried an axe, as did Woodhull, while Walter and Tug each carried a galvanized iron water pail for the expected honey. Billy knew that the guide would run no risk of having his charges badly stung and would undoubtedly smoke the hive well before laying it open.

The minutes passed on leaden wings. What was the matter? Why didn't Jim whoop when he found the tree as he had agreed to do? Could he have overrun it? A slight rustle in the bushes on the edge of the clearing some thirty yards to the right caught Billy's attention. Something was moving there. To kill time he started to investigate. "Probably a porcupine," he muttered to himself, as he softly stole forward.

Creeping on hands and knees to the shelter of a fallen tree trunk he cautiously raised his head and peeped over. Instead of the expected porcupine he saw a little brown furry animal vainly trying to pull over an old log, and emitting funny little discontented whines as it tugged. At first glance it looked something like a clumsy puppy, and then the truth flashed across Billy and made his eyes pop out. It was a bear cub, a very little fellow at that.

With impulsive Billy to act first and think afterward was ever the governing principle. It was so now. Quietly dropping down behind the tree trunk he hastily slipped off his jacket. Then rising to his feet he reached forward and threw it over the head of the unsuspecting little animal, recklessly throwing himself after it. For a few minutes there was a desperate struggle accompanied by muffled squeals. Then Billy succeeded in getting the wildly clawing fore-paws smothered in the folds of the jacket and, pinning down the stout little hind-legs, he had his victim helpless.

"Gee, now I've got him what'll I do with him?" he panted. A sudden inspiration

came to him. He remembered noticing a huge hollow stump in the middle of the clearing. If he could get him over to that and drop him into it he could be held prisoner until the bee hunters returned. Wrapping the enveloping jacket still tighter around the imprisoned head and fore-paws Billy gathered the struggling bundle in his arms and started for the stump.

Just before he reached it pandemonium broke loose in the woods behind him. There were wild yells in all keys from Big Jim's deep base to Chip Harley's shrill falsetto. Billy chuckled. "Must have stirred them bees up something awful," he muttered. "Funny I didn't hear 'em choppin'. There, you little fiend!" He dropped the cub into the hollow and spread the jacket over the top. Then for the first time he realized that a baby as small as his captive must have a mother at no great distance. His face went a trifle pale under its coat of tan. "I wish them fellers would quit fightin' bees and come out," he muttered.

Almost with the thought his wish was gratified. Chip came first. The bee veil was

still over his head and he looked not on the order of his coming. He floundered out of the brush, caught a heedless toe under a stick and fell headlong. He was up in a flash, blindly struggled through a raspberry tangle that he might have gone around, bumped into a half-hidden stump and went down again with a little moan. Then he was on his feet again and passed Billy as if he was trying to break the hundred yard sprint record.

Tug was a good second, and he had little advantage over Chip in the method of his coming. He seemed to have some pressing engagement back at camp, and was "going strong" when he passed Billy.

Walter and Woodhull appeared next, but as they were unencumbered by veils they picked their footing with more discretion, and Louis stopped as soon as he reached the open, Walter following his example half-way to Billy. Lastly appeared Big Jim, who came out of the woods leisurely, his axe still in his hand. Jim was grinning. It was clear to Billy that something had happened, but that whatever it was the guide considered the danger past now.

Something had happened. Following the guide in single file they had proceeded some distance when they became aware of a humming sound which steadily increased in volume as they advanced. Suddenly Big Jim abruptly halted and held up a warning hand. There was a puzzled look on the guide's face.

"Somethin' has made them bees plumb mad fer sartin," he whispered.

The volume of sound increased. It was as if off in the tree tops beyond a huge top was spinning. The brush was still too thick for them to see the tree itself. Then into the steady hum of the bees there broke a new note, half growl, half whine, followed by the ripping sound of rent wood.

The guide's face cleared. "You boys are goin' t' see somethin' in a minute yer won't likely ever see agen. Now come on, and be mighty careful about not makin' no noise," he whispered.

A few feet further on the thick young growth opened up and they came in full view of Billy's bee tree. What they saw drew a startled exclamation from the three younger boys, at once silenced by a warning hiss from Big

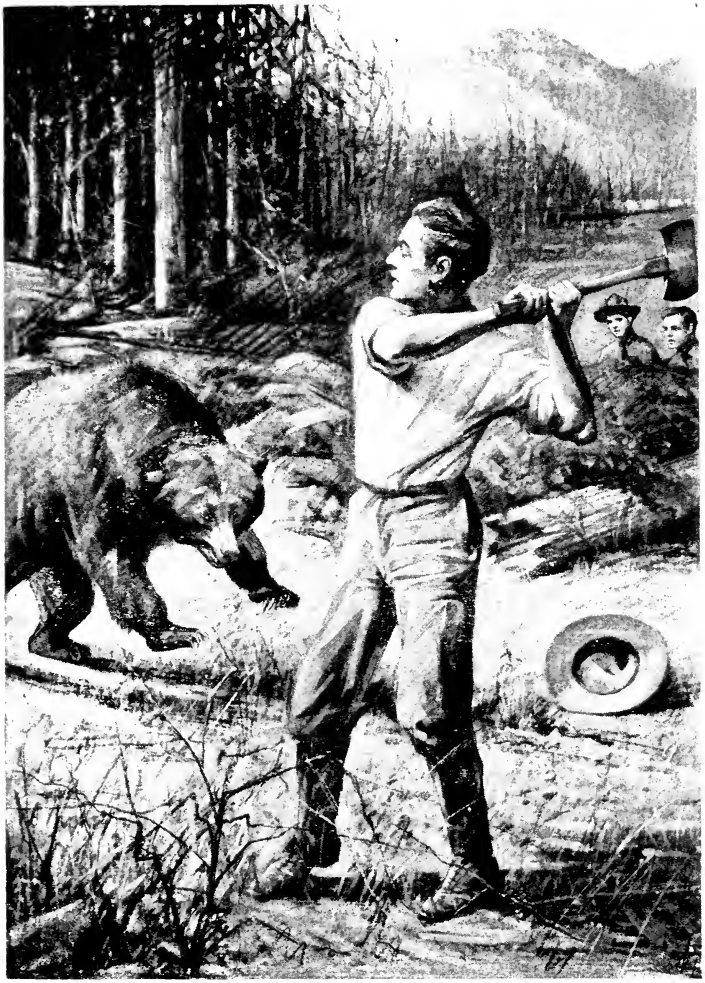
Jim. There, fifty feet from the ground, gripping the tree with hind legs and one huge fore arm, was an immense black bear. The long claws of the paw that was free had been hooked into the entrance hole and a long strip the length of the crack which had led to Billy's undoing a few days previous had been torn out, exposing the hollow packed with comb. Bruin was then occupied in scooping out great pieces of comb dripping with honey and transferring them to her mouth, whining and growling and stopping every other second to slap at the bees clustered in an angry cloud about her head.

What no one did see, because all eyes were turned up instead of on the ground, were two little brown bundles of fur that scurried for the shelter of a windfall.

"Ain't a mite o' danger," whispered the guide, noting the panicky look on some of the faces. "In 'bout a minute yer'll see th' worst scared bar in the North Woods. Now don't run when she comes down if yer don't want th' hull camp laughin' at yer," he warned, seeing Chip and Tug already beginning to edge away.

Had Jim been aware of the presence of the two cubs he would have adopted a very different course of action. He was counting on the fact that despite its great size and immense strength the black bear is one of the most timid of all wild animals in the presence of man unless wounded, cornered or called upon to protect its young. Perhaps timidity is not quite a fair indictment. Let us say rather that of all wild animals none has come to have a more wholesome respect for man, and it is a well-known fact that not even a deer will bolt quicker at man's approach than will this black comedian of the big woods.

It was with this fact in mind that the guide advanced a few steps and suddenly sent forth an ear-splitting whoop. Things happened then with a rapidity that left no time for thought. Walter stoutly maintains to this day that the bear neither slid nor climbed down—that she simply let go and dropped. Certain it is that the echo of Jim's wild yell was still ringing in the woods when she landed with a thump that brought forth a grunt. Then, instead of the mad flight on which the guide had counted, she reared on her haunches with her back to



"RUN!" HE YELLED

the tree, growling savagely, her little pig eyes red with rage.

Big Jim took in the situation at a glance. "Run!" he yelled, himself holding his ground and swinging aloft his double edged axe.

Even as he uttered the warning the bear charged. Walter, who stood a little to one side, unconscious of what he was doing, hurled the pail he was holding full at the angry beast and turned to run. This proved the salvation of Big Jim. The rolling clattering object distracted the bear's attention for an instant. She paused long enough to give the pail a vicious blow which by chance sent it clattering noisily into the old windfall behind which the cubs had taken refuge. There was a frightened squeal followed by the sound of scurrying feet among dead leaves.

Big Jim heard the squeal and understood. "Cubs, by gum!" he exclaimed.

The bear heard too. She stopped, irresolute, half turned toward the windfall, then faced the guide and reared, growling savagely. There was another faint squeal from beyond the windfall. The bear dropped to all fours and slowly retreated in the direction of her

cubs, pausing every few steps to turn and growl threateningly over her shoulder.

It was the guide's opportunity to retire in good order and he made haste to avail himself of it, reaching the clearing just in time to see Chip and Tug disappear down the home trail on the far side.

Now that the danger was over the humor of the situation tickled him immensely and as he with Walter and Woodhull approached Billy all three were finding relief in a hearty laugh.

All at once they became aware that there was something unusual about Billy. He was dancing around the old stump like a lunatic, yelling, "I've got him, Jim! I've got him! I've got him!" He was without his jacket and his shirt was in tatters. His face and arms were bleeding from deep scratches.

The guide gaped at him open mouthed. "Great smoke, sonny," he drawled, "yer look as if yer was th' one thet had met a bar, not us."

"I have, Jim, I have! It's in there!" yelped Billy.

The guide peeped into the hollow, and a

long drawn whistle of astonishment escaped him. Then abruptly his face sobered and he cast an apprehensive glance back at the forest.

"Must hev been three cubs," he said, reaching in and catching the whimpering little bear by the scruff of the neck. "Bars don't generally hev but two, but I've heerd say thet sometimes they has three. This leetle chap must hev strayed off while his mother was a-clawin' fer thet honey. I reckon we better be movin' right along. It ain't goin' t' be no ways healthy round these parts when Mrs. Bar misses this leetle chap."

Wrapping the cub in Billy's jacket once more Big Jim set the pace for camp at a rate that kept the smaller boys on a dog trot, not without many a fearful glance behind them.

Camp was reached safely, where the news of Billy's capture spread like wild-fire, and for once he found himself the hero he had so often pictured himself; wherever he went he was the center of an admiring group.

The doctor was petitioned in a round robin signed by every member of the camp for permission to keep the cub as a pet. This was granted, and "Honey," as he was called,

soon became one of the most important members of Woodcraft, where his droll antics were a constant source of amusement.

The Delawares were jubilant, for Billy's prize scored them fifty points, and when a few days later the second bee tree was successfully lined out and this time the honey obtained without adventure, Billy's popularity was secure for all time, for this also added fifty points, as he had foreseen it would.

"He was a harum-scarum before, and this sure will be the ruin of him," Woodhull bewailed to his chum, Seaforth.

But Woodhull was wrong. There was a change in Billy. He was the same lovable, light-hearted boy as before, but the careless, reckless spirit that had so often led him into mischief was lacking. For the first time he seemed to have a serious purpose in life. And it dated back to the morning after the lonely night in the forest. Billy was finding himself.

"I reckon he did hear a bar thet night," said Big Jim to the doctor as they discussed Billy's episode with the cub. And Billy knows he did.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SUPREME TEST

HALF-WAY between Woodcraft and the Durant lumber camp the trail crosses Speckled Brook, once a noted trout stream famed for the size of the spotted beauties that lurked in the black depths of its pools, or hung on the edge of its boiling rapids watching for the unfortunate grub or fly struggling helplessly on the shimmering surface of its swift current. Persistent whipping day in and day out through the open seasons by anglers whose creed is little more than greed has robbed it of its fame for big strings, and the ruthless destruction of cover on its watersheds by the axe of the lumbermen has so reduced its water supply that a note of pathos has crept into the sweetness of its song and sadly marred the beauty of its forest setting.

Yet even now there is an indescribable charm about Speckled Brook, and in some of the deeper pools are finny warriors worthy

the skill and patience of lovers of the rod. Walter never could come within sound of its purling song without experiencing an irresistible desire to linger.

It was calling to him now as with noiseless step he strode along the trail toward the Durant camp. Since his trip to Lonesome Pond he had continually practiced "still walking," whenever the opportunity offered. It had been the chief incentive for many a morning tramp. He had become fairly proficient by now, and on an ordinary trail walked with freedom and ease without giving conscious thought to his feet. Twice he had surprised deer and frequently approached smaller game to within close range of observation before they became aware of his presence. Each success brought with it a sense of growing skill, a feeling that in time he might fairly hope to pit his trained knowledge against the wonderful senses of the wild life around him with the advantage not wholly on their side.

Now as he came within sound of Speckled Brook he quickened his step that he might linger for a few minutes on the log bridge

over which the trail ran. It was hidden from his view by a sharp turn so that he was almost upon it before he became aware that some one was before him.

Seated on a stringer of the bridge, his face buried in his arms, was a khaki and flannel clad figure. An expensive split-bamboo rod lay beside him unheeded, the tip jerking up and down in a way that evidenced something more than the current tugging at the end of the line. It was a pathetic figure, contrasting strangely with the joy of the beautiful morning. Now and then there was a heave to the drooping shoulders, while a muffled sob mingled with the song of the brook.

Walter paused, irresolute. He had recognized Harrison at the first glance, and his heart went out to the boy who had sought the sanctuary of the wilderness to give way to his misery where none should see. With an inborn delicacy of feeling Walter turned softly, and without a sound stole back up the trail until the turn had effectually hidden him from view. The bitterest thing in a boy's life is to be seen in his hour of weakness by another boy. Somehow it seems to rob him of

something of his manhood. Without analyzing it in this way Walter felt that it would be unfair to Hal to let him know that he had been seen crying.

At the end of a hundred yards or so Walter once more turned in the direction of the bridge, whistling shrilly. This time when he rounded the turn Hal was on his feet rebaiting his hook, while a ten-inch trout flapped at his feet. His hat was pulled low over his face, but on his cheeks were traces of tears hastily wiped away.

"Hello, Hal! What luck?" called Walter cheerily as he approached.

"I don't know as it's any business of yours. You see I'm not buying 'em, anyway," was the surly and bitter reply.

Walter flushed, and an angry retort rose to his lips, but with it came a vision of the picture of utter misery he had witnessed a few minutes before. He stepped forward and held out his hand.

"Don't, Hal," he pleaded. "Let's be friends."

"You don't want me for a friend; nobody does," growled the other.

"Hal, I came pretty near punching your head once, or trying to, anyway. Now I am coming back at you. When you say that I don't want you for a friend you are not telling the truth. Now, are you going to punch my head or are you going to shake hands?" Walter once more extended his hand, all his good humor restored.

Slowly the other reached forth and gripped it. "I—I guess I'll shake," he said, a sheepish smile twitching at the corners of his mouth. Then he pushed back his hat and faced Walter squarely. "It's mighty white of you, Walt," he blurted out hurriedly. "I do want you for a friend. I guess I need friends if any fellow ever did. Nobody's got any use for me back there," nodding in the direction of the camp, "and I can't get away, because I haven't anywhere to go. You see, my folks are all in Europe for the summer. I'm stuck here, and I've got to stay."

"I'm glad of it," said Walter heartily.

"Wh-what do you mean?" demanded Hal.

"Just what I say," replied the other. "I'm glad of it. You've got in wrong here with the camp. If you went away now you'd al-

ways be in wrong with the whole crowd. Maybe you think that if you got away and never came back it wouldn't matter what the fellows think, but it would. They'd always remember you, not for what you really are but for what they think you are, and no matter how great a success you might make when you grow up you'd know all the time that a lot of people didn't believe in you. You've made a lot of mistakes. Now you've got a chance to correct 'em right where you made 'em. You can't forget 'em yourself, and don't want to, but you can make the other fellows forget 'em ; and they will, too, if you'll give 'em a chance.

" Your dad's got a lot of money, and I guess you've grown up to think that money is the only thing that counts. I s'pose it does count for a lot in the city, but out here in the woods it doesn't count a little bit. It's the fellow himself, the stuff that's in him, and not what he's got. You forget all about your dad, I mean his money, and sail in for everything that's doin' here, and you'll find that the boys will meet you more'n half-way. Gee, I'm getting to be a regular preacher ! "

Hal laughed, the first genuine laugh he had had for many a long day. "It's the best sermon I ever heard, Walt," he said. His jaw suddenly shot forward in set lines. "By George, I believe you are right, and I'm going to fight it out right here!—If you'll help me," he added wistfully.

"Sure I'll help!" replied Walter heartily, "and so will the rest of the fellows, if you'll give 'em a chance."

Hal gazed at the brook thoughtfully for a few minutes. "I—I hardly know how to begin," he said hesitatingly.

"Go hunt up Chief Avery of the Senecas and tell him that you know you've made a mess of things and that you want to square yourself with the tribe and with the rest of the fellers. He'll help you out, and tell you what to do. He's white all through," advised Walter.

"I know he is," admitted Hal. "He's been mighty decent to me. I guess if it hadn't been for him the other fellows would have refused to speak to me at all. I wish—I wish there was some way I could make up some of those points the tribe lost when I was

found out. I can't do it fishing, for honest, Walt, I don't know the fishing grounds at all. I tried to bribe Pat Malone to tell me where he caught those big fish, but he knew which side his bread was buttered. Said he'd catch 'em for me, but I couldn't make him loosen up and show me where I could catch 'em myself. There's one fellow in the woods that money talks to all right, all right! He knew that as long as I had to have the points I'd pay for 'em, and he held me up a little stiffer each time. I don't see what got into him to come peach on me. Did—did you put him up to it?"

Hal had the grace to blush as he asked the question, and before Walter could reply he hastened to apologize. "I know you didn't. At first I was sure you did. I guess I was pretty sore. I thought you had it in for me, and I wouldn't blame you a little bit if you had had. But I don't see now what struck Pat. Do you know, I've always had more'n half a suspicion that he stole Mother Merriam's pin. I guess he could tell something about it if he was pinned right down to it."

"Forget it, Hal," Walter broke in. "You and most of the other fellows have got Pat sized up all wrong. I don't know who stole the pin, but I do know it wasn't Pat Malone. I tell you that there isn't a Scout in Woodcraft Camp that right down in his heart is whiter than Pat. Oh, he's tough, but that's because he's never had half a show. I didn't know a thing about his comin' into camp to see the big chief until it was all over. He did it because he's just begun to learn a few things about honor and what honor means. Fact is, Hal, I was up against it on this honor business myself. I didn't want to blab on you, and yet it wasn't fair to the other fellows to let you go on scoring when I knew that you weren't getting the points on the level. I was fishing with Pat that morning and he found what was troubling me. He didn't say a word, but while I was off in the woods that afternoon he took a quick sneak into camp, and you know the result."

Hal nodded grimly.

"I tell you, Pat did a big thing," continued Walter. "Money doesn't grow on every bush in these woods, and those few dollars Pat got

from you meant more to him than a thousand dollar check would to you or me. And I don't think he did it just for me, either. I think he saw that you were playing it low down mean on the other fellows, and he began to see that by keeping mum and taking the money he was a party to it. Pat came in and told, to clear himself in his own mind. I tell you he has the Scout idea all right, and he's got it straight. I don't believe I'd have had the sand to do what he did."

The expression on Hal's face had changed curiously as Walter spoke. He was seeing things in a light that he had never seen them before, getting a new perspective of life.

"Walt, did Pat show you his fishing ground?" he asked abruptly.

"No, I stumbled on it myself."

The other laughed a little embarrassed laugh. "I just wanted to be sure," he replied. "I've tried mighty hard to fool myself into believing that you succeeded in bribing Pat where I failed, perhaps not with money, but in some way. I heard all about how you licked him the morning you got here and I thought that—that maybe you

—you——" he paused and flushed painfully.

"You thought that I promised Pat another licking if he didn't show me where the fish are," Walter finished for him.

"Something of that sort," admitted Hal. "I didn't really believe it, but I wanted to, and I guess I tried mighty hard. But all the time I knew you were on the level and—and it made me sore to have you beat me twice with fish when I'd risked so much to win the points."

"Well, that's all past, and we'll let the past dig its own grave and bury itself," said Walter. "We're both on the level now, and we're goin' to stay there. I'd let you in on that fishin' ground, only when I found it I found Pat there and I promised him not to tell a soul. Isn't there somethin' else you're interested in that you can go in for points on?"

"I don't know," replied Hal thoughtfully, "I like to paddle pretty well."

"Great!" cried Walter. "Go in for it, and go in hard. You know I'm out for the quarter-mile swim. Pluggin' at it every day. You do the same thing with your paddling. Get

next to Avery and tell him what you want to do and that you really mean it. He'll get a coach for you before you can turn 'round. The Senecas need every point they can get, and Avery knows it. You see the Delawares are just naturally goin' to trim you fellows," concluded Walter with a grin.

"They sure would if there were any more Senecas like me," said Hal mournfully. Then his face cleared, and he began to reel in his line. "I'm goin' straight back to camp now and hunt up Avery and ask for a chance to make good!"

"That's the stuff!" cried Walter heartily. "Here's luck to you, old man! I'm awfully glad we're friends at last. I'm off to the Durant camp. Got a permit this morning. Never was in a real logging camp, and Pat's goin' to show me the whole thing. Keep a stiff upper lip!"

The boys shook hands warmly, and while Walter with a light step and lighter heart hit the trail for the lumber camp Hal resolutely set his face toward Woodcraft. It was not an easy thing that lay before him. It was hard, bitterly hard. He had not realized how hard

until he had left Walter and faced the thing alone. Never in his whole pampered life had he had to stand alone on his own feet. Now he faced the severest test a boy can face. Dimly he realized that it was a crisis in his life—a call to his manhood. Could he meet it? Could he?

"I will! I will! I will!" he repeated over and over. "I will! I will! I will!" Presently he began to run, fearing that his courage would fail him before he could find Avery and make a clean breast of matters. When he came in sight of the camp he slowed down. It was going to be even harder than he had thought. Perhaps Avery wouldn't be there. He found himself hoping that he wouldn't. Was it really necessary after all to so humiliate himself? Perhaps if he waited a little he could do some big thing that would win the fellows over to him. Other fellows were all the time doing things, why shouldn't he? There was Billy Buxby with his bee trees and bear. Why couldn't he do something big like that?

Hal was fighting a battle, the hardest battle that boy or man is ever called to engage in—

a battle with self, a fight to a finish for the right to look himself in the face without blushing, a fight for his manhood. Beads of cold perspiration broke out on his forehead. And then he looked up and saw Avery standing in front of the wigwam. The battle would be won or lost in the next few minutes.

For an instant he faltered. Then his jaw shot forward in hard set lines as it had back there in the woods with Walter. "I will! I will! I will!" he muttered. Somehow with every repetition of those little words the way seemed easier. And then in a flash came the idea for the supreme test of the manhood within struggling to come into its own. He began to run once more, to run away from the coward striving to hold him back, from the Hal Harrison he had known so long, that the whole camp knew.

"Chief," he panted, saluting Avery, "may I—may I see you alone for a few minutes?"

Avery led the way into the deserted wigwam. What passed there is known only to the two lads themselves. When they came out the face of the younger boy was pale, but it bore a look of fixed resolve, and there were

lines of character which had wiped out much of the old weakness.

"You are quite sure you want to do this thing, Hal? You know it is not necessary," said the chief.

"Yes it is necessary—for me," replied Hal firmly, "and I've simply got to do it for—for myself."

After evening mess Chief Avery requested the Senecas to remain for a few minutes, and after the Hurons had filed out he briefly announced that one of their number wished to say a few words.

Hal rose and faced his comrades. His knees shook so that he could hardly stand, and little streams of perspiration trickled down his face. But there was that new set to the jaw, and though he gulped painfully once or twice, he plunged into the task he had set himself.

"Fellow Scouts," he began, "I—I want to apologize to all of you for what I have done and for the disgrace I've brought on the tribe. I'm sorry. I didn't realize what I was doin'. I knew that the fellows didn't like me, and—and I wanted to be popular," he blundered

on. "I thought if I scored a lot of points for the tribe that maybe I should be and—and I didn't see any other way. I've made an awful mess of things, and I see it now. I'd like a chance to start over again, and—and maybe really do something for the tribe. I—I—want to make good and—and have some friends among the fellows," he ended lamely.

He sat down weakly, and buried his face on his arms. At a sign from the chief the tribe filed out quietly. When the last one had gone he walked over and put his hand on the bowed head at the end of the table. "Hal," he said gently, "you have made good. That was the bravest act I've ever seen in Woodcraft Camp. We're prouder to have you a Seneca than we would be to win that deer's head. That was the supreme test, and we're proud, all of us, to have a fellow tribesman with the sand to meet it as you have done. You'll find that you have won your friends, boy."

Later, when Hal had recovered his self-possession somewhat and went out among his comrades, he found that it was as Avery had said. On all sides were friendly hands to

greet him, and in a quiet unobtrusive way his fellow Scouts made it clear to him that at last he was one of them. He had already made good.

CHAPTER XV

CRAFTY MIKE

When Walter parted from Hal at Speckled Brook he quickened his pace to make up for lost time. Presently he came in sight of the Durant camp. Pat Malone, whose official capacity at the camp was that of "chore boy," was on his way to the spring with a couple of empty pails. His usual good-natured grin lighted his face at Walter's approach.

"Oi'd begun t' think ye was afther fergittin' ye had an ingagement wid yer frind av th' woods," he called.

"Hello, Pat! Sorry I'm late," replied Walter, offering to carry one of the pails.

Pat waved him aside. "Shure, wud ye be takin' th' bread an' butter out av the mouth av a poor worrkin' man?" he demanded. "'Tis me job fer which Oi draws me pay, an' now Oi've lost me market fer fish Oi'm thinkin' Oi'd best be shure av me shtupendous sal'ry."

He picked up the pails brimming with cold spring water and started for the rear of the main cabin, whence the voice of "Cookie" could be heard commanding him to hurry, and heaping anathemas upon him for a lazy, good-for-nothing ne'er-do-well.

Pat winked. "Dogs that bark be afther havin' poor teeth," said he. "Oi'll be wid ye in a minute."

He was as good as his word, and was soon ready to play the host. Walter found the camp similar in arrangement to Woodcraft. It lacked the refinements of the latter, but was snug and comfortable, exactly adapted to the needs of the rough men to whom it was "home" the greater part of the year. When they had thoroughly inspected the cabins, stable and shop Pat suggested that they visit the present "cutting." This Walter was most anxious to do, for he had never witnessed actual logging operations.

The trail was rough but well built, for upon the character of the trail depends much of the lumberman's success in getting his logs to the water. A poorly built trail means costly waste of time, energy and strength of man and

beast when the time comes for getting the cut down to the driving point. Wherever the trail dipped to low or swampy ground logs had been laid with their sides touching one another. This is called a corduroy road, and is the only practical and effective method of preventing horses and wagons miring in low, swampy ground. Such a trail is rough traveling in dry weather, but when the heavy snows of winter have covered it and have been packed down and iced it forms an ideal slide for the lumber bobs with their huge loads of logs.

The trail gradually led up the lower slopes of Old Scraggy, and some two miles from the camp the boys came upon one of the crews at work. The crash of falling trees, the rasp of saws, the sharp ringing blows of axes biting into hard wood, the shouting of rough voices and now and then a snatch of rude song proclaimed that the work of destruction was in full blast.

The scene was one of intense interest to the city boy, and quite upset his preconceived ideas of how trees are felled. "Why, I thought they chopped trees down!" he exclaimed.

"Not whin they've a good saw an' two good byes fer th' inds av it," said Pat.

They walked over to where a couple of saw men were preparing to cut a great pine. There was a fascination in watching the huge cross-cut saw with its double hand grasp at each end eat its way into the trunk of the great tree, the two men swaying back and forth in perfect rhythm, broken only when it became necessary to drive in the wedges that kept the saw from binding and that would eventually send the tree crashing down on the exact spot that they had picked out for it.

Soon there came the warning snap of breaking fibers, the great tree swayed slightly, leaned ever so little and then, as with a shout for all hands to stand clear the saw men sprang back, it slowly and majestically swung forward until, gathering speed, it fell with a mighty crash, carrying down several small trees that stood in its path, and shivering its upper branches as it struck the earth.

It seemed to Walter as if it had hardly struck before the axemen were upon it, their great double edged axes flashing in the sun as they stripped off branch and stub until in an in-

credibly short time it lay shorn of its glory, a huge bare pole fit to be the mast of one of the Yankee clippers that were once the pride of the American marine.

But no such honor awaited it. Another team of sawyers attacked it at once, cutting it into mill lengths. Then came "Jim." Jim, so Pat proudly claimed, was "some hoss." Clanking at his heels was a stout chain ending in a sharp heavy hook. This was driven into one end of one of the logs and then at a word from his master—one could hardly say driver, for there were no reins—the big horse set his neck into his collar and guided solely by the "gee" and "haw" of shouted command dragged his burden down to the skidway where the logs were piled to await the coming of snow. It was wonderful to see with what intelligence the horse picked his way through the tangled brush, and it was equally wonderful to see the lumber-jacks at the skidway catch the great log with their peaveys and roll it up to the very top of the huge pile already on the skids.

A rough lot, these lumbermen, of many nationalities, English, Irish, Scotch, French

"canucks," a half-breed or two, and some who boasted that they were pure "Yank." They were rough in looks and rough of speech, ready to fight at the drop of a hat, but warm-hearted, loyal to a fault to their employers, ever ready for work or frolic. Rough indeed, but theirs is a rough life. They took a kindly interest in Walter, explaining the many things he found so strange, and it was with real regret that he finally took the back trail.

And it was with something of sadness too, for he was a true lover of nature and there was something tragic in the crashing of those great trees and the despoiling of the great forest.

But Pat left him little time for thoughts of this kind. Producing a bag of the famous cookies of which Walter had once had a sample through the agency of Chip Harley, Pat kept up a running fire of comment on his camp mates, while they munched the crisp brown wafers.

As they sighted the camp the cook was hanging a wash. Pat's eyes twinkled with mischief. Motioning Walter to follow him he stole in back of the stable. "Shure 'tis

meself that clane forgot to inthrodush ye to th' most important mimber av Durant camp," he whispered. "Shtay here till yez see some fun."

He slipped into the stable, and in a few minutes was back, leaving the door open. Peeping around the corner Walter saw a crow walk out with the stately step of his tribe. "'Tis Crafty Moike!" whispered Pat.

The black rascal stood for a minute or two blinking in the sun. Then he flew up on the stable roof, where he appeared to have no interest in anything in the world save the proper preening and dressing of his feathers. In the meantime the cook finished hanging out his wash to dry and turned back to the cabin. Hardly was he inside the door when Crafty Mike spread his wings and without a sound flew over to the clothes-line, where he quickly and deftly pulled out every pin, giving each a throw to one side.

When the last pin was out and half the wash lay on the ground he flew swiftly to a tall pine on the far side of the clearing, cawing derisively as he went. It was plain that "Cookie" knew only too well what the

sound of that raucous voice meant. With a pot in one hand and a dish towel in the other he rushed from the cabin pouring out a perfect flood of vituperation and invective on his black tormentor, while behind the stable Pat fairly hugged himself with glee.

"Caw, caw, Billee, Billee! Caw, caw, caw!" shouted Mike, sidling back and forth along a bare limb of the pine, evidently in huge enjoyment of the joke.

"Oi shplit his tongue so he talks a little, and Billy is the cook's name," whispered Pat, noting the look of amazement on Walter's face when he heard the crow speak.

"Caw, caw, Billee, Billee!" Mike was quite beside himself with enjoyment as he watched the angry cook pick up the fallen clothes, which he was too wise to rehang while the black rascal was at liberty. Besides, many of them must be returned to the tub.

"I'll blow your blasted head off, that's what I will!" shouted the cook furiously as he disappeared in the cabin with the last of the wash. In a moment he was out again with a shotgun in his hands. Walter grabbed Pat

by one arm. "You're not going to let him shoot, are you, Pat?" he asked in real alarm.

Pat chuckled. "Don't yez worry about Moike," he said. "'Tis not fer nothin' Oi named him Crafty. He knows a gun as well as Oi do, an' just how far it will carry."

The cook was now sneaking toward the pine, apparently quite unconscious that he was all the time in plain view of his would-be victim. Mike waited until he was half-way there, then spread his wings. The cook threw up the gun and blazed away with both barrels, though the range was hopelessly long, while Mike's derisive, "Caw, caw, Billee, Billee!" floated back from the shelter of a thick clump of hemlocks beyond.

"But won't the cook get Mike when he comes back?" Walter asked with real concern.

"Moike won't come back to-night unless Oi call him," replied Pat. "'Tis a woise burrd he be afther bein'! Whin Oi go in Oi'll tell cookie how much the byes will enjoy th' joke whin they come in. He'll shware a bit an' thin he'll be afther beggin' me not to say a wurrd about it. Oi'll promise if he'll promise

to lave Moike alone, an' that'll be th' ind av it till nixt toime." It was evident that Pat and Mike knew their man and were wise with the wisdom of experience.

"Moike is a great burrd," continued Pat. "He's as full av tricks as a dog is av fleas, an' th' wurst thafe in three counties, bad cess ter him. He'd shtale th' shmoile off yez face if it was broight enough an' he could pry it loose. He'd follow me into th' prisince av th' saints. Oi have ter shut him up whiniver Oi lave th' camp or, glory be, he'll be taggin' along an' mebbe gettin' me in all sorts av throuble. But Oi love th' ould rascal just th' same."

At Pat's mention of Mike's thieving proclivities a startling thought flashed into Walter's mind. Had he at last found the long lost clue?

"Pat," he broke in abruptly, "did Mike ever follow you to Woodcraft?"

Pat scratched his head in an effort to remember. "Oi couldn't say," he replied. "Oi think loikely, fer there's few places he hasn't followed me."

"Would he follow you there now if you'd let him?" asked Walter.

"Shure! Oi couldn't lose him if he wance saw me hittin' th' trail."

"Can you call him now?" pursued Walter.

"Sure!" Pat answered promptly.

"Listen, Pat," said Walter eagerly, and he hurriedly told Pat all about the loss of Mother Merriam's pin, discreetly omitting all reference to the suspicion against Pat himself so long entertained at the camp.

"Th' dirthy thafe!" broke in Pat indignantly. "Now who could it be, Oi wonder! None av th' byes here wud do a thrick loike thot, and yez say there was no sthrangers in camp. But what has all this got to do with Moike?"

"I'm coming to that," said Walter. "Maybe it hasn't anything to do with him. That's what I want to find out. Maybe you don't remember coming into camp on an errand that morning and visiting Dr. Merriam's office, but you did. Now, if Mike had been following you, and had seen that pin on the window sill would he have been likely to have picked it up and carried it off?"

"As sure as little pigs has curly tails," replied Pat with conviction. "Oh, th' vil-

lain! It's mesilf will wring th' black neck av him with me own hands wance Oi git thim on him!" he exclaimed, a realizing sense of the situation and the position in which he had been placed dawning on him. "'Tis a wonder yez didn't arrist me fer th' thafe, and Oi wud not have blamed ye at all, at all! Just lave me get th' two hands av me on that burrd! Sure his heart be as black as his coat!"

Walter laughed. "Wait a while, Pat, wait a while," he said. "We don't know yet that Mike had anything to do with it. Now here's my plan: You call Mike so that he can see us start down the trail to Woodcraft. Then you go with me until we get almost in sight of the camp. I'll leave you there and go ahead. I'll get a bright button or something and put it on the window sill of Mother Merriam's window and then get out of sight. Then I'll whistle three times and you come along in as if you had an errand at the office. Go right by the window and around to the front door, where I'll meet you. Then we'll watch Mike and see what he does."

"Walter, me bye, 'tis a great nut yez have

on the two shoulders av yez!" exclaimed Pat admiringly. "We'll do ut."

He put his fingers to his mouth and whistled shrilly. At once there was an answering caw from the distant hemlocks, and Mike appeared winging his way toward them but, with the canny wisdom which had earned him his name, giving the cabin a wide berth. He dropped down to Pat's shoulder at once, where he jabbered in crow talk as if telling Pat all about his joke on the cook, all the time studying Walter with eyes so bright and sharp as to make the boy almost uncomfortable.

Without further delay they started for Woodcraft, the crow riding on Pat's shoulder or occasionally flying a short distance ahead. At the edge of the woods Pat sat down to wait while Walter hurried ahead. Hunting through his ditty bag he found a bright brass button and hurried over to the office. Fortunately no one was about. Putting the button on the sill where the pin had been left the morning of its disappearance he slipped around in front and gave Pat the signal.

Pat came at once but Mike, distrustful of the camp or perhaps plotting mischief, lin-

gered behind. Pat passed the window and joined Walter in front of the office. Then they cautiously peeped around the corner to watch Mike. As soon as he discovered that Pat was out of sight he quickened his flight and winged his way directly toward the rear of the office. The two boys watching could see him turn his head from side to side as he flew, his bright eyes scanning everything in sight. When he reached a point abreast of and above the window he made an abrupt half circle, dropped down to the sill as silently as a shadow, seized the button and then, mounting high, winged his way in strong swift flight "as straight as the crow flies" for Durant camp.

"The black scoundrel!" murmured Pat. "The black-hearted thafe!"

It was too late for Walter to think of returning to the lumber camp that afternoon, and he had an engagement the next morning at nine.

"Lave it to me," said Pat. "Oi know ivery hidin' place av th' ould thafe, an' if he shtole the pin 'tis in wan av thim this very minnut. If thot robber took th' pin, an' Oi misthrust

he did, 'tis Pat Malone that will have it back here by half afther eight to-morrow marnin'."

After evening mess Walter called Tug and Chip to one side.

"I've got a clue," he announced with pardonable excitement.

"What is it? Who is it?" they demanded as one.

"I'll tell you to-morrow morning at half-past eight," replied Walter, and that was all they could get out of him that night.

Walter slept but poorly. He was burning with curiosity to know the result of Pat's search, and he was alternately filled with joy at the thought of being able to return the precious pin to Mother Merriam, and torn with the fear that Crafty Mike might have lived up to his name and hidden his prize beyond Pat's reach.

By eight o'clock the next morning he could wait no longer and started up the Durant trail. It was just before he reached Speckled Brook that he heard Pat's shrill whistle, and by the sound of it he knew that there was good news. A few minutes later Pat swung into view.

Crafty Mike, looking abject and bedraggled, was tucked securely under one arm, while the free hand was jammed in a trousers pocket. Pat's freckled face stretched into a broad smile as he caught sight of Walter. He drew his hand from his pocket and spread it wide open. There in the palm, side by side, lay Mother Merriam's pin and the brass button which had proved Mike's undoing. Walter sent forth a joyous whoop, and did a war dance that was expressive if not dignified.

Before going to the big chief Tug and Chip were taken into confidence and shown the pin and the thief under pledge of secrecy. Then Pat and Walter started for the office. In response to Dr. Merriam's cheery "Come in," the two boys entered, Walter elated and Pat diffident. Walter had carefully prepared a little speech, but in the excitement of the moment it went completely out of his head. He did remember to salute his chief, and then he blurted out the news so fast that the words fairly tripped over each other: "We've found Mother Merriam's pin, and we've found who the thief is, and ——"

"Wait a minute," interrupted the doctor,

smiling. "What is this about Mother Merriam's pin?"

For answer Pat extended his hand with the pin on the broad palm. The doctor's face lighted with pleasure as he reached out to take it.

"But the thief?" he said. "I don't quite understand."

"Here he is, sor," said Pat, thrusting forward the protesting Mike. The doctor's face was a study as he bade the boys sit down and tell him the whole story. When they had finished he quietly questioned them until he had drawn from Walter all that he had hitherto kept from Pat, how the latter had been suspected, how he had been sure that Pat was innocent, how he had found the crow's feather caught in the screen, and how this fact had come to his mind as soon as Pat had mentioned Mike's thieving propensities.

"Upton, I want you and Malone, and Mike, too," he added with a whimsical smile, "to remain here until I return."

He left the room, and a few minutes later Walter was startled to hear the "recall" sounded. Many of the boys had not yet left

camp, and the others within hearing came hastening in. When they had all gathered the doctor stepped out in front.

"Some time ago," he began, "the 'recall' was sounded to tell you that a thief had been in our midst, and to ask you to give of your services in an effort to regain the pin which had been stolen. It seemed to me that it was quite as important to again sound the 'recall' to tell you that the pin has been recovered."

He paused as a stir ran through the group of boys, and they broke out in a hearty cheer. "And," he continued when quiet had been restored, "the thief taken, and that this happy result has been accomplished by one of your own members. Who that member is I am not going to tell you, but I want you to know that I consider that in his whole course of action he has displayed the very highest form of scoutcraft, for he has not only apprehended the thief and recovered the plunder, but what is of vastly more importance, he has removed unjust suspicion from one whose good name not one of you has had real cause to doubt."

He then briefly sketched the story of the

search for and the finding of the pin, no names being mentioned, and concluded by bringing forth the pin and Crafty Mike for all to see.

Sitting in the office Walter and Pat had heard every word, and Walter's face glowed with pleasure at the doctor's praise. He felt that his reward had been great indeed, and when the doctor concluded by saying that fifty points would be credited to the Delawares in recognition of his work, his joy was complete.

An hour later Pat Malone paused on the trail to Durant camp to look with shining eyes at a gold piece in his hand. "Caw," said Crafty Mike, looking down from his shoulder with greedy eyes.

"Shut up fer a black-hearted thafe!" growled Pat. "Sure, 'tis me ruin an' me fortune that yez are loike ter be."

CHAPTER XVI

THE POACHER OF LONESOME POND

Hal and Walter stood at the landing waiting for the launch with the day's mail and express matter. There had been an unfortunate error in ordering the needed photographic chemicals, and Walter was still in ignorance of the results of his trip to Lonesome Pond. As the packages were thrown out his eye caught the familiar label of the photographic supply house.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, pouncing on the long-looked-for package, "I'm off to get first crack at that dark room. Want to come in with me while I develop, Hal?"

"I sure do," was Harrison's prompt response. "I'm almost as anxious as you are to know what you've got on those films. The results may make a big difference to us Senecas, you know. We can't give the Delawares many more points."

As they started toward the office Big Jim

and a stranger passed them talking earnestly. The latter had come in the launch. He was a man of medium build. His hair and eyes were gray, the latter clear and keen. There was nothing to especially distinguish him from the general run of guides of that region.

"Who is he?" asked Hal of Billy Buxby, who had saluted the stranger.

"Game warden," replied Billy, briefly. "Been a lot of deer shootin' round these diggings, so they say, and the big chief has been trying for some time to get the warden up here. Now he's here I reckon there'll be something doing."

Walter thought of his experience at Lonesome Pond, and wondered if the warden would go in there. As the boys passed through the office to the dark room Dr. Merriam, Big Jim and the warden were in earnest conversation.

"Whom do you suspect, Jim?" It was the warden who spoke.

"Red Pete," replied the guide promptly. "But yer understand I ain't got a mite o' proof. Ain't seen hide nor har o' him, but I've seen signs thet spells Red Pete t' me. O'

course some o' th' boys up t' th' camp will go out and get a piece o' meat once in a while, but thet ain't doin' no great harm."

"It ought to be stopped, Jim!" the doctor broke in sharply. "The law is law, meant for the lumber-jack just as much as for the city sportsman. I have no patience with this attitude of the natives that the law is made for the other fellows, not for them. Either the laws should be wiped off the statute books or they should be enforced to the letter without discrimination or favor."

"Thet may be so, doctor, but folks 'round here don't sense it thet way," replied Big Jim. "Anyway, th' real harm thet's bein' done th' deer is from some low down skunk thet's too lazy t' do honest work an' is jes' shootin' fer th' lumber camps. An' if it ain't Red Pete may I never sight another rifle! Nobody knows whar he is, or if they do they won't tell. You git yer hands on Red Pete, and this deer shootin' will stop."

The boys passed into the dark room and heard no more. Walter at once prepared his developer and also a fresh supply of hypo, for he was resolved that no precaution should be

neglected to get all that might be in the negatives.

"Going to use tank development?" asked Hal.

"No," replied Walter, "I'm not. Ordinarily I should, but I'm going to give each of these films separate treatment, and develop each for all that it holds. You know I want another fifty points," he added.

The daylight subjects were developed first and, with the exception of one fogged across one corner, were all that could be desired. Walter was particularly pleased with the results of his first successful shots on the way in to Lonesome Pond, and as the image of the great blue heron rapidly increased in strength under his skilful manipulation of the developer he confided to Hal how his rattled nerves had led him to miss two splendid chances previous to the opportunity afforded by the heron.

A portrait of Big Jim holding up Walter's double catch of trout would have been hard to improve, and Hal, looking over the other's shoulder, blushed as he recalled the big trout he had bought only to be beaten by the catch

of which he now saw the proof growing before his eyes.

For the flashlights Walter prepared a special developer, and as it washed over the first film both boys bent over the tray eagerly. Almost at once three spots, one slightly above the other two, appeared, and these rapidly took outline until the eager watchers could see clearly the doe and three fawns of Lonesome Pond.

"Hip, hip hurrah!" shouted Hal, slapping Walter on the back. "There are your fifty points for the Delawares!"

"Now for the last one of all," said Walter as, the others all in the hypo, he picked up the negative made by the flash on the runway. "I knew what ought to be on the others, but I don't know what ought to be on this except that it ought to be a deer."

He bent impatiently over the tray, gently rocking the developer back and forth over the negative. Presently he looked up, and in the dim ruby light Hal could see a puzzled frown wrinkling his forehead. "That's the queerest thing I ever got up against!" he exclaimed. "I can make out the horns of a big buck, but they seem to be all mixed up with the figure

of a man. If I hadn't taken such mighty good care of these films I'd say that it was a case of double exposure. Must be that I had another case of rattles, and forgot to pull the tab of the one made just before the flashlight, and so made the latter right on top of the former. Yet this doesn't act like an over-exposed negative, and a double exposure would be an over-exposure. Oh, well, I give it up! We'll see what it looks like when it comes out of the hypo. Here it goes in. Now open that door, Hal, and I'll open the window. I'm about roasted."

Hal threw open the door and the two boys stepped out into the office. The doctor was still there, but Big Jim and the warden were nowhere to be seen. At the sound of the opening door the doctor looked up.

"We beg your pardon, doctor, and hope that we haven't disturbed you," said Walter.

"Not in the least, Upton," he replied smilingly. "I presume you have been developing those Lonesome Pond negatives, and to tell you the truth I am almost as anxious to see them as you are yourself. You see Big Jim has told me all about that trip, and he was

positively enthusiastic over the flashing of the three deer."

The doctor came over to the dark room and stepped in. "I presume they are about fixed by this time," he said, dipping his hand into the fixing bath and taking out a negative. He held it to the light and examined it critically. "Just a trifle over time, don't you think, Upton? Still it is an excellent negative, and the composition is admirable. Hello, what's this?" He had dropped the first one into a tray of running water and had picked up a second which he was turning round and round in his hands as if he hardly knew which was top and which was bottom. "Ha, I have it!" An expression of perplexity passed over his face and his brows puckered. "What's this, Upton?" he asked. "I didn't hear anything about any such photo as this."

Walter stepped behind him and looked at the negative the doctor was holding to the light. At first he could make nothing of it but a tangle of foliage. Then suddenly he saw against this background the figure of a man stooping beneath the burden of the body of a deer across his shoulders. Walter's

mouth gaped foolishly as he studied the negative.

"What does it mean, Upton?" the doctor repeated, a twinkle in his eyes as he saw the boy's vacant look.

"I don't know, sir," replied Walter truthfully enough.

"But the negative is yours, isn't it?" persisted the doctor.

"Yes, sir. No, sir. That is—why, of course it must be mine," replied Walter confusedly. "I don't understand it at all, sir."

"How many flashlights did you make?"

"Two; the one of the three deer and the one on the run. This——" He paused as it flashed over him for the first time that this was a flashlight negative.

"Yes," said the doctor with a quizzical smile, "this is one of them. And as it certainly isn't the one of the three deer it is the one on the run."

"But—but what does it mean?" asked Hal, looking over the shoulders of the others.

"It means," said the doctor gravely, "that Upton has secured the evidence that will convict the poacher of Lonesome Pond."

He dropped the film back in the fixing bath. "I see it is not quite clear yet. Fix and wash it thoroughly and then if you can, Upton, I wish you would make a print from this before Jim and the warden return to-night. They have gone up to the Durant camp to look about a bit. I must request you both to say nothing whatever about this matter until I give you permission. And of course you understand that the photograph is to be shown no one. Bring the prints to me as soon as you have them made. If you have time make a print from each of your other negatives. We'll entertain the warden on his return."

By noon the films were dry and by three o'clock that afternoon a complete set of prints was in Dr. Merriam's hands. Late in the afternoon Big Jim and the warden returned, and shortly after the doctor sent for Walter.

"Warden," said he, "this is Upton, the lad who was with Jim at Lonesome. I've called him in thinking you may like to question him a bit as to conditions at Lonesome, and also that he may have the pleasure of showing

you some photos in which I know you will be interested, as will Jim also. I tell you, warden, some of our boys are doing great work here! It takes something more than mere knowledge of photography to get such pictures as these! The man behind the camera has got to be something of a woodsman, as I think you will admit when you have looked these over."

As he finished speaking he handed the package of prints to Walter face down, and the boy, noting that they were numbered in consecutive order, instantly realized that this was a cue for him to show them in that order. As one by one the prints were laid on the desk Big Jim bent over them with all the enthusiasm of a great overgrown boy, telling the warden the story of each and making comments that made Walter blush to the roots of his hair. When the beautiful picture of the doe and her two fawns was put before him Jim's delight was without bounds.

The doctor smiled. "So you think that's pretty good, do you, Jim?" he asked.

"Good? It's the best I ever see!" exclaimed the guide.

"Upton has one that will interest you still more, I think, Jim. Show it, Upton."

The warden and guide leaned forward eagerly as Walter placed the last print on the desk. For a full minute there was absolute stillness as the two men studied the print in surprised astonishment. Walter will never forget the expression on the guide's face as he stared first at the doctor, then at Walter and finally back at the print, while slowly comprehension of what it meant dawned.

"What did I tell yer?" he roared, smiting the desk with a huge fist. "What did I tell yer? Didn't I say it was Red Pete? Is this evidence enough for yer, warden?"

"It's evidence enough, Jim; but say, I haven't got this through me yet. You didn't tell me anything about seeing Red Pete, let alone taking his photograph. It's a wonder he didn't put a knife in you for that."

Jim laughed. "I expect he would if he was sure what had happened," he replied. "Yer see thet thar buck must hev taken one o' th' other runs an' reached th' lake, where Pete was laying fer him. Pete potted him, an' then waitin' just long enough t' bleed him

an' take out his innards (I found 'em th' next mornin') he dug out 'fore we should come snoopin' round. He jes' happened t' hit th' run th' camera was on, an' o' course he fired th' flash. Oh, glory! I wish I could hev seen his face right after thet flash! I bet every black har on his head was standin' on end an' thet Pete was reelin' off prayers t' every saint he's ever heard o' as fast as his tongue could go!"

"I notice that he held on to the deer," observed the warden dryly.

"You bet he did!" replied Jim. "Thet flash jes' naturally blinded him fer a few minutes, an' he couldn't see nothin'! Then he heered us comin' on th' jump an' he didn't hev no time t' look fer th' camera an' bust it. He jes' hit th' trail double quick a-trustin' t' luck thet we didn't git nothin'."

"This is all the evidence I want," said the warden. "Doctor, I want you to let me have Jim for a couple of days. I need him, for Pete's a slippery customer, and it'll need two of us to surprise him. We'll start for Lonesome early to-morrow morning, and the less said about our movements the better. Re-

member, boy, mum's the word," he added, turning to Walter.

Jim had been studying the photograph closely. "Whopping big buck Pete's got thar!" he remarked, then added sharply, "Son, come here an' tell me if this is a scratch on th' picter or if it's in th' picter!"

The guide was pointing to a tiny white line on the shoulder of the deer. Walter examined it closely. "It's in the picture," he said slowly. Then, a startling idea slowly forming in his mind, he looked up at the guide, who instantly read his thought.

"Yes," said the big fellow with angry bitterness. "It's him. It's the King o' Lonesome Pond, th' big buck you 'n' me trailed thet mornin', murdered by a half-breed cutthroat who'd treat you 'n' me jes' th' same if he dared, an' he could see a dollar in it. I'm ready t' start when you are, warden, an' th' sooner I see his ugly mug behind th' bars th' sooner I kin enjoy my vittles agin."

When the name of Red Pete was first mentioned it had sounded strangely familiar to Walter, but try as he would he could not

place it. Now as he studied the photograph he recognized the low-browed, surly axeman who had been in the waiting room at Upper Chain the morning of his arrival in the woods, and there flashed through his mind Big Jim's characterization of Pete that morning as the "meanest man in th' mountains." How little he had dreamed that their lines would ever cross, and now—he shivered involuntarily as he wondered what the outcome would be and what would happen if the outlaw should chance to learn of the evidence Walter now held in his hand.

"I—I guess you'd better keep the film and the prints," he said, turning to Dr. Merriam, and breathed easier as the doctor took them. Then excusing himself, he hurried out to find Hal and warn him not to breathe a word about the second flashlight picture.

Did Red Pete suspect? And if so what if he should happen to meet him alone in the woods? For the next few days he seldom went far from camp, and never alone. Even then he had the feeling of being watched, and would turn suddenly half in fear and half in hope that he might catch a glimpse of the

breed's threatening face peering from some leafy screen. Walter's nerves were playing him tricks. Nor did they become any easier when the warden and Jim returned empty handed from Lonesome Pond. They had found plenty of traces of the poacher, in fact had found his camp, but it was evident that the outlaw had transferred his headquarters elsewhere.

Owing to other business the warden was obliged to postpone the search for the time being, but left with a promise to return at an early date to run Pete down. In the meantime Walter continued to feel uneasy, and the lumber camp to enjoy fresh "veal."

CHAPTER XVII

THE HAUNTED CABIN

"WHAT'S on this afternoon?"

"Nothin' much."

"Come on, push it out! If it's nothin' much the sooner it's out of your system the better."

"Well, what's the matter with a visit to the haunted cabin? I guess we can get a permit all right."

The speakers were Hal Harrison and Walter. They had just met after noon mess, and the proposal to visit the haunted cabin came from Hal.

"Great idea," exclaimed Walter. "There's Chief Avery over there now! You tackle him while I hunt up Woodhull. I'm pretty sure he'll let me go."

Permission was readily granted, and the two boys at once launched a canoe, and pointing the bow up and across the lake soon left the camp behind. The haunted cabin was the same to

which Walter had heard veiled allusions on his first day in camp, and to which he supposed he had been carried for his initiation ordeal. Ever since then he had intended to visit it, but until now there had never seemed a good opportunity. It was located on the other side of the lake some three miles up, and was a half mile back from the water some little distance off to one side of a lumber trail. As it was out of bounds, it was necessary to get permission from the chiefs in order to visit it.

"What do you know about it, Walter?" asked Hal as they sent their light craft swiftly over the water.

"Not much except that there was a murder or a fight or somethin' of the kind there years ago. Do you know anything about it?"

"Only the stories that are floatin' 'round, and no two agree," replied Hal. "I've been kind of interested, and have run down all the stories I could get hold of. I guess there was a tragedy there all right, but from all I can gather it was a fair fight, and not a cold-blooded crime. The story that seems to be most generally accepted is that there

was a fight over a girl. The cabin was built by an old half-breed trapper before there were any lumber trails through these parts at all, and he lived there with his daughter, who was said to be a mighty pretty girl. The old fellow's name was Duquesne, but he was more Indian than French, and was commonly called Indian Joe. He was a grouchy old fellow, and people didn't have any more to do with him than they had to.

"The girl was a beauty, and old Joe was so jealous of her that he never would let her out of his sight when they came down to the village to trade, and the young fellows of the region found that the vicinity of old Joe's cabin was anything but healthy. Finally a young Scotchman named Bruce moved down here from Canada and ran a line of traps up in the region that Joe had come to consider his own special preserve. This was bad enough, and roused all the Indian in him, but when he discovered that young Bruce had fallen in love with the girl and that she was in love with him his rage knew no bounds and he made a lot of ugly threats, so that the friends of the young fellow warned him to keep away from

the cabin, and I guess the girl begged him to also.

"But Bruce was hot-headed and afraid of nothing and no one. When he heard of the threats he rightly guessed that things were probably mighty uncomfortable for the girl, so he jumps into a canoe and heads straight for the cabin. When he got there old Joe was out on his trap line and the girl begged Bruce to leave. But he wouldn't, and waited till the old man came back. He was in the cabin when the old man returned and the latter got inside before he discovered the visitor. He started to throw his rifle up, but Bruce was too quick for him and knocked it out of his hands. But the old man had a knife, and he didn't waste any time. He was all Indian then, and was on Bruce like a wildcat.

"I guess Bruce saw it was kill or be killed, with the girl for the stakes, so he whips out his own knife, and they turned that cabin into a shambles.

"The young Scotchman had the advantage of weight and youth, but Joe was all Indian, with every trick known to that kind of fighting, and with black hate in his heart. I guess

it was some fight, all right, and the girl seeing the whole thing. Finally Bruce got in a lucky thrust that ended things and old Joe with it. He was cut up something fierce himself and so weak from loss of blood that I guess he thought he was going to cash in. But the girl managed to bind him up and get him into the canoe, though how she did it no one knows, for the cabin is half a mile back from the lake. Anyway, the first the village knew of it she came paddling in with Bruce in the bottom of the canoe, more dead than alive.

"You know lumbermen and backwoods people are awfully superstitious, and it wasn't long before they had the cabin haunted by Indian Joe's spirit, moaning for his lost daughter. Hunters and trappers began to tell all sorts of stories of queer sounds around the cabin and soon no one would go near the old place. Superstition's a queer thing, isn't it?"

"You bet it is, and it isn't confined to lumbermen and backwoods people by a long shot!" replied Walter. "What became of the girl?"

"Oh, Bruce recovered, of course, and mar-

ried her, and they moved up into Canada. There's the landing at the lumber trail."

A few minutes later they drew the canoe out on the shore. A lumberman's batteau was drawn up at one side, and they could hear voices ahead of them on the trail.

"A party going up to the Brown camp, I guess. I understand they've begun cutting about three miles back," said Walter.

The boys set out at a brisk pace along the trail. "Avery says that the trail to the cabin is so overgrown that it's hard to find, but that there is a Scout sign where it turns off of this trail, and then a line of old blazes," said Hal. "It's on the right a short half mile from the lake."

The boys slackened their pace, scanning the right hand side of the trail as they advanced. Presently Walter stopped and pointed to a little group of stones half hidden in the brush to the right. It consisted of a stone of fair size with a smaller one resting on top of it and a third on the ground to the right of the others. Both boys recognized it as the old Indian sign which means "Trail to the right."

Turning in they soon found a tree with a

blaze so old that it was nearly covered with bark. Getting the direction from this they were able to sight the next blaze and so pick out the trail.

"Doesn't look as if any one had been over this for an age," said Hal as they carefully picked their way along.

In about fifteen minutes they saw an opening in the tree tops ahead and soon stepped out into what had once been a small clearing, but which was now overgrown with brush and berry thickets, and in places good stands of second growth birch and maple. In the midst of this dreary waste stood the "haunted cabin."

The boys stood at a little distance and looked at it in silence for a few minutes, thinking of the tragedy which was said to have been enacted there. It was the usual type of log cabin, a one room affair with the remnants of a shed or small addition of some kind clinging to the rear. The cabin had been well built, for it was in a good state of preservation save that in places the roof had fallen, leaving black, yawning holes. It had been turfed at some time in its existence, and such parts as

were intact were covered with a tangle of grass and weeds. Altogether it was a desolate and dreary looking object.

"Gee, I don't wonder they think it's haunted! Well, let's see what it looks like inside," said Walter.

They approached it from the front, and to their great surprise found the door still intact and closed. When they attempted to open it they were further mystified to find that it would not yield to their combined efforts. It was locked on the inside.

"What do you know about that!" exclaimed Hal. "Let's try the back door."

Here a further surprise awaited them, for their entrance was as effectually barred as before. They stared at each other blankly.

"Wouldn't that get your goat!" muttered Walter. "Must be that some hunters have had nerve enough to use it, and have locked it up for safe keeping," he added with a half-hearted laugh. His eyes idly taking in the surroundings suddenly became fixed on a point a few feet distant. "Say, Hal," said he abruptly, "there's a path, and it looks to me as if it had been used lately. Let's follow it."

It certainly was a path, and with every evidence that it had been recently used. The boys followed it in puzzled silence until it abruptly terminated at a spring. It required no very keen observation to see that the spring had been cleaned out at no very distant day. As by a common impulse they turned and stared back at the cabin, which returned the stare with its gaping windows, as empty of life and forlorn in appearance as could well be imagined. And yet there was something sinister about the old ruin. It lay like a wet blanket on the buoyant spirit of adventure with which they had entered the clearing.

Walter gave a little embarrassed laugh as he said, "It's queer, but I've had a feeling of being watched ever since we struck the clearing. There's no reason for it, and yet I can't get rid of the idea that somebody's eyes are on us."

"Must be the 'hant,'" said Hal with a laugh. But his face sobered as he added, "I've had an awfully uncomfortable feeling myself, Walt. I don't believe I'm keen to crawl in one of those windows. Reckon I've seen all I

want to of the old place. What do you say if we go back?"

"I've had enough," agreed Walter. "I don't wonder they call the old thing haunted. Guess that story got on our nerves all right. I never thought I was superstitious, but I sure would hate to spend a night here."

The boys quickened their pace as they passed the ruin, throwing a hasty glance in at the yawning windows, but in the darkness of the interior they could make out little.

"Ugh!" said Hal as they picked up the trail out, "I'm glad to leave the blamed old place. I guess it's haunted all right!"

Had he looked back and seen the venom in the pair of black eyes that, through one of the windows they had so recently passed, watched them disappear on the trail, he would have still further rejoiced that they were leaving the old ruin behind.

They found the canoe where they had left it, but the batteau was gone. With Hal in the stern and Walter in the bow they soon had half a mile of open water between them and the shore. It was then that Hal noticed for the first time that there was considerable

water in the canoe and that it was increasing rapidly. His exclamation of dismay drew Walter's attention to their predicament. The canoe had not leaked before—what did it mean?

A hasty examination of the interior showed that the water was coming in slightly forward of Walter's seat, and that at the rate it was gaining their little craft would soon be awash. There was nothing wherewith to bail except their hands or sneaks, and these were wholly inadequate in face of the fact that one must paddle. They did not dare go back whence they had come, for instinctively they felt that the source of their present difficulty lay there. Camp was still some two and a half miles distant and the afternoon was growing late. It was a situation to test their powers of resource and scoutcraft to the fullest.

Walter hurriedly stripped off his trousers and shirt. "What are you going to do?" cried Hal. "You can't swim from here to camp!"

"Don't intend to," responded Walter hurriedly. "I'm goin' to try to find out what's happened to us. When I get out you get as

far back on the stern as you can. That will put her bow clear out of water and give me a chance to see a good half of her bottom."

With the words he plunged over, and Hal crawled back as directed. Walter came up at once under the bow and found that, as he had anticipated, he could examine easily the whole forward half of the canoe's bottom. It took but a moment to locate the trouble, two long gashes close to and parallel with the keel.

"Some one's cut it!" cried Walter. "Must be one of those lumber-jacks that was over there with the batteau did it. Never knew of them doing anything like this before. They've played tricks on the fellows lots of times for fun, but never anything low down mean like this, or anything that meant danger. You stay back there and paddle a while, Hal, and I'll swim. With her bow out that way she can't leak any more. By and by you can swim and I'll paddle. Water's fine!" he added with a grin.

The water had rushed to the stern and Hal, sitting astride the canoe, was able to bail much of it out with one of Walter's sneaks. Then while Walter swam he slowly paddled so as to

remain close to the swimmer. The wind had begun to freshen a trifle and as they were heading it came from a point off the port quarter, and Hal soon had his hands full to keep on the course at all, for the high bow was caught by every little gust and frequently he was spun around as if on a pivot.

Walter was swimming easily, but he realized that the distance to be covered was beyond his powers, and he thought rapidly as he swam. Hal was not a strong swimmer, but would be able to cover a short distance while he had a breathing spell in the canoe. Gradually he came to a realization of the struggle his comrade was having with the canoe, and that the latter's arms would be strained and weary when it came his turn to take to the water. They must try some other plan. Studying the lines of the canoe he concluded that with both of them far back in the stern the gashes would be partly out of water, and that with both paddling they might make some distance before the water reached the danger point. Then he could go overboard again and Hal could bail out as before.

This plan was at once tried and with both

putting all their strength to the paddles they gained a full mile before it became necessary for Walter to go overboard again. This time they were near a small island, and thither Hal drove the canoe and had beached and emptied it by the time Walter arrived. After a thorough rest they prepared to start again, when they spied a boat coming down the lake. One look was sufficient to assure them that their troubles were at an end. There was but one pair of shoulders in the woods like those sending the light craft toward them with powerful strokes.

"Jim! Jim! Oh, you Jim!" they yelled shrilly.

The rower stopped and turned toward them, then altered his course, and in a few minutes was resting on his oars alongshore while, both talking at once, they poured out their story and showed him the gashed canoe. The big fellow's face wore a look of perplexity as, with the boys in his boat and the canoe in tow, he headed for camp.

"Whar did ye say ye went when ye left th' canoe?" he asked.

"Up to the haunted cabin," replied Walter.

"Was the hant t' hum?" he inquired with a grin.

"No," said Hal, "or if he was he was mighty seclusive. Both doors were locked."

"What's thet ye said, son?" demanded the guide sharply, as he stopped rowing for a minute.

"I said the doors were locked and we couldn't get in," replied Hal.

"And there was a path down to the spring that looked as if some one had been using it," added Walter.

"Prob'ly some lumberman been in thar fer a drink," said the guide with an assumption of carelessness, and then lapsed into such a state of abstraction that the boys gave up trying to interest him further. He came out of it as they approached the camp.

"Don't say nothin' 'bout this; jes' leave it t' me," he advised. "I'll explain it t' th' doctor. 'Tain't like th' boys o' th' lumber camps t' do no sech trick as this, and I'd hate t' hev any feelin' stirred up. You boys jes' keep mum."

The boys were quite willing to do so, and bidding them a hasty farewell Jim strode off toward headquarters.

"Queer thing, the whole business," mused Walter as they watched the guide disappear in the office. "I wonder what Jim's got on his mind."

And he would have wondered still more if he could have heard the guide exclaim, as he banged his big fist down on the desk at the end of a fifteen minutes' talk with the doctor:

"It's him as sure as shootin'! We'll git him this time, or my name ain't Jim Everly!"

CHAPTER XVIII

ON GUARD

On the bald top of Old Scraggy stood a slender figure in khaki. The broad-brimmed regulation Scout hat was tilted back, revealing a sun-browned face which was good to see. The eyes were clear and steady. The mouth might have been called weak but for a certain set of the jaw and a slight compression of the thin lips which denoted a latent force of will which would one day develop into power. It was, withal, a pleasant face, a face in which character was written, a face which denoted purpose and determination.

The boy raised a pair of field-glasses to his eyes and swept the wonderful panorama of forest and lake that unfolded below him on every side. Like mighty billows of living green the mountains rolled away to fade into the smoke haze that stretched along the horizon. The smell of smoke was in the air. Over beyond Mt. Seward hung a huge cloud

of dirty white against which rose great volumes of black, shading down to dingy sickening yellowish tinge at the horizon. Through his glasses the boy could see this shot through here and there with angry red. There was something indescribably sinister and menacing in it, even to his inexperienced eyes. It was like a huge beast snarling and showing its teeth as it devoured its prey. On the back side of the Camel's Hump another fire was raging. But neither of these seriously threatened Woodcraft Camp, for a barrier of lakes lay between.

"I'm glad they're no nearer," muttered the watcher half aloud. He swung his glasses around to the camp five miles away by the trail, though not more than three and a half in an air line, and his face softened as he studied the familiar scene. There was a song in his heart and the burden of it was, "They have got some use for me! They have got some use for me! They have got some use for me!" It was Hal Harrison.

There had been a wonderful change in the boy in the few weeks since his meeting with Walter Upton at Speckled Brook. It had been

a hard fight, a bitter fight; sometimes, it seemed to him, a losing fight. But he had triumphed in the end. He had "made good" with his fellow Scouts. He had friends, a lot of them. With only one or two was he what might be called intimate, but on every side were friendly greetings. From being an outcast he had become a factor in the camp life. He was counted in as a matter of course in all the fun and frolic. He had done nothing "big" to win this regard. It was simply the result of meeting his fellows on their own ground and doing his share in the trivial things that go to make up daily life.

He was thinking of this now and his changed attitude toward life, toward his fellow men. In a dim way he realized that a revolution had been worked within himself, and that his present status in the little democracy down there on the edge of the lake was due, not so much to a change in the general feeling of his comrades toward him, but in his own feeling toward them. His present position had always been his, but he had refused to take it.

Somehow money, which had been his sole

THE BOYS WERE DRILLED IN WIGWAG SIGNALLING

standard whereby to judge his fellows, had dropped from his thought utterly as he strove to measure up his comrades. It had even become hateful to him as he gradually realized how less than nothing it is in the final summing up of true worth, of character and manhood. And with this knowledge all his old arrogance had fallen from him like a false garment, and in its place had developed a humility that cleared his vision and enabled him to see things in their true relations.

"My, what a cad I was when I hit Woodcraft, and how little I realized what the Scout's oath means!" he murmured. "The fellows have been awfully white to me. If—if I could only do something to show 'em that I appreciate it, could only really and truly 'make good' somehow. Seems to me this smoke is getting thicker."

He turned once more toward Seward. The wind was freshening and the smoke driven before it was settling in a great pall that spread and gradually blotted out mountain after mountain. The blue haze thickened in the valleys. When he turned again toward Woodcraft it had become a blur. The sun, which

had poured a flood of brilliant light from a cloudless sky, had become overcast and now burned an angry red ball through a murky atmosphere. His throat smarted from the acrid smoke. There was a strange silence, as if the great wilderness held its breath in hushed awe in the face of some dread catastrophe.

Hal was on guard. It was Dr. Merriam's policy to always maintain a watch on the top of Old Scraggy during dry weather that any fire which should start in the neighborhood might be detected in its incipient stages and a warning be flashed to camp. The boys were drilled in wig-wag signaling, and in the use of the heliograph, the former for use on a dull day and the latter on a bright day, the top of Old Scraggy being clearly visible from camp, so that with glasses the wig-wag signals could be read easily. At daybreak a watch was sent to the mountain station, while another went on duty at the camp to receive the signals. At noon both guards were relieved. Only the steadiest and most reliable boys were detailed for this duty. This was Hal's first assignment and, while he felt the responsibility, he

had hit the Scraggy trail with a light heart, for he realized the compliment to his scout-craft. And was not this evidence that he was making good?

The smoke thickened. The smart in his eyes and throat increased. Uneasily he paced the little platform that had been built on the highest point. Suddenly it seemed as if his heart stopped beating for just a second. Why did the smoke seem so much thicker down there to the east at the very foot of Scraggy itself? With trembling fingers he focussed the glasses. The smoke was rising at that point, not settling down! Yes, he could not be mistaken, there was a flicker of red! There was a fire on the eastern slope!

Hastily he sprang for the mirror with which to signal his discovery, but even as his hand touched it he realized the futility of his purpose. The sun was hopelessly obscured by the smoke. The flags! He grasped them and turned toward the camp. Where was the camp? Vainly he sought to locate it. The smoke had drawn a curtain over it through which even his powerful glasses would not pierce. For a minute panic gripped him.

Then into the chaos of his mind broke the calm quiet voice of Dr. Merriam in one of his weekly talks at the camp-fire: "The man or boy to face an emergency is the one who keeps cool—who stops to think."

Deliberately Hal forced himself to sit down on the edge of the platform and review the situation. It was five miles to camp. By the time he could get there and a party be organized and return the fire would have gained such headway that there would be no checking it. To the west, nearer by at least a mile and a half, lay the Durant camp. But there was no broken trail there, nothing but a blazed trail which he had never even seen and which at best would be slow following. But hold on! The loggers were at work this side of the camp, not over two miles distant in a straight line! Perhaps they would discover the fire. A moment's reflection, however, convinced him that this was unlikely, at least until it was too late. A shoulder of the mountain intervened. Was he Scout enough to hold his course for two miles through that tangle of wilderness?

It seemed the only thing to do if he was to

get a warning through in time. There was no time to lose! His lips tightened and he got up abruptly and began to tighten his belt. He would try it. He would do it! Turning for another look at the fire his glance was arrested by a box half hidden beneath a corner of the platform. In a flash he was on his knees, half sobbing with relief as he dragged it forth. Why hadn't he remembered Jack Appleby's wireless outfit before?

Jack had been on Old Scraggy the day before experimenting with wireless messages to camp, and had left his apparatus on the mountain, intending to return this afternoon to continue his experiments. How Hal blessed the good fortune that had led him to take an interest in wireless and join the little group of boys who were continually experimenting with it in camp! There were several outfits there, and one or another was in use most of the time. He prayed with all his soul that such might be the case now, as, with hasty fingers, he adjusted the apparatus and sat down to the key. One after the other he sounded the private calls of all the stations in camp, between each call listening for a reply. Would they

never hear? Click, click, click, click, over and over and over again he repeated the calls, while the cold sweat stood out on his forehead. Would they never hear? Would they never hear? Should he give it up and make the plunge for the Durant cutting? No, this was his best chance.

Click, click, click! What was the matter with them down there? Ha! Was that Joe Brown's answering signal? With feverish haste he pounded out in the Morse code, "Is this you, Brown?" The reply came promptly: "Yes. Who are you?" With a sigh of relief Hal bent over the key and forced himself to send his message slowly, that there might be no confusion in receiving it: "This is Harrison, watch on Scraggy. Fire just started on eastern slope. Warn Doctor."

"Warn Doctor of fire. All right," spelled the receiver at his ear.

Hal shouted aloud in his relief. Hastily repacking the apparatus he turned to look down at the threatened danger. Already the fire had gained great headway. Would the doctor be able to bring help in time? A heavy stand of magnificent timber lay directly

in the path of the flames. It was one of the choicest holdings of the Durant company.

The boy looked down at the Durant cutting on the other side. If he could at once warn the men at work there they might reach the fire in time. He would try. Carefully noting the direction with his pocket compass he headed straight for the cutting.

That trip down the mountain is a nightmare to Hal to this day. Slipping, sliding down the steep upper slope, bruised by falls on rocky ledges, crawling under and over fallen timber, struggling through seemingly impassable windfalls, his shirt torn, his hat lost, his face and hands bleeding from numerous scratches he struggled on, running whenever the way was sufficiently open, stumbling, falling but doggedly holding to the course set by the little compass in his hand.

It seemed an eternity before the sound of voices mingled with ringing blows of axes and the crashing of trees told him that he was almost there. A few minutes later he staggered out among the astonished loggers. His message was soon told, and almost before he had regained his wind the fire gangs were organized

and with axes and shovels, the latter kept at hand for just such emergencies, were on their way to the scene of trouble.

Hal begged to go along, but the boss refused to let him. "You've done your part, my boy," he said kindly. "You can be of no help there and might be in danger. Rest here a bit and then you trot along down to camp and tell Cookie to fix you up and give you something to eat. Son, you may not know it, but you're all in."

Hal did know it. Now that the excitement was over he began to realize for the first time how utterly weary he was. He was weak and trembling. He felt the smart of his bruises and the ache of strained muscles. The boss was right. His place was in the rear, not on the firing line.

A long rest at the Durant camp and the friendly ministrations of Cookie made him feel more like himself. Late in the afternoon he hobbled into Woodcraft. The camp was nearly deserted, for all of the older boys were on the fire line. Walter was the first to see him, and hastened to congratulate him, for the whole camp knew by this time who had

sent the warning. Then others crowded around to shake hands and insist on hearing his story from his own lips. This Hal told, omitting, however, to mention his terrific cross country struggle, explaining his bruises as the result of a tumble over a ledge.

As soon as Walter got a chance he drew Hal to one side. "Say," he began eagerly, "the game warden and a deputy started for the haunted cabin early this morning."

"What for? To get the 'haunt'?" asked Hal.

"Exactly!" replied Walter. "And the 'haunt' is Red Pete! Big Jim figured it all out when he picked us up on the lake the other afternoon. You know they couldn't find Pete up at Lonesome Pond. He probably got wise that Jim would be on his trail after that shootin' while we were in camp there, and promptly vamoosed. When we told Jim about the cabin's being locked and the path to the spring he tumbled in a minute. That was the safest place in the woods for Pete, and he was probably right in the cabin when we tried the doors. Jim went up there the next day and did a little scouting. He

found a blind trail down to the lake a lot shorter than the trail we took. Pete was probably afraid that we'd tell about the locked cabin and some one would get wise, so as soon as we were out of sight he made a quick sneak down to the lake ahead of us and slashed the canoe in the hope that we'd sink and get drowned. Jim sent word to the warden, and now I guess there'll be something doing at the haunted cabin!"

"How did you find out all this?" asked Hal.

"Jim told me this morning. He was going in with the warden, but when your message came he had to go fight fire. He told me just before he started."

"Gee!" exclaimed Hal. "Some excitement to-day! Do the other fellows know?"

"No. Jim said I could tell you, but that we're to keep it to ourselves."

Just after sundown the fire fighters returned, weary but triumphant. The fire had been gotten under control before serious damage had been done, but this would have been impossible but for the timely arrival of the Durant gang, who were trained fire fighters,

and who had reached the scene first. The boss had told the doctor of how he received the warning.

The latter's first action on reaching camp was to issue orders for the preparation of a huge camp-fire to be started after evening mess. When this was lighted and the whole camp gathered round Dr. Merriam stepped into the circle for what the boys supposed was one of his usual camp-fire talks. He began by a brief review of Scout principles and the need of coolness and clear thinking in the face of sudden emergency, and then briefly and forcefully he sketched Hal's exploit of the day, ending by expressing his personal indebtedness to the boy who had, by using his head and supplementing this by a courageous act, saved property of great value. "It would not be inappropriate if there should be some expression of the camp's feeling at this time," concluded the doctor with a twinkle in his eyes.

In a flash Woodhull was on his feet. "The Woodcraft yell for the Seneca who has made good!" he shouted, and beating time with both arms he led the long rolling "Whoop-

yi-yi-yi! Whoop-yi-yi-yi! Whoop-yi-yi-yi! Harrison!"

Then despite his efforts to escape Hal was pushed to the center beside the big chief while the four tribes circled the fire in the mad dance of triumph.

But the thing that was sweetest of all to the tired boy was the discovery that the Senecas had been credited fifty points for his feat. At last he had done something to wipe out the old score. His cup was full.

CHAPTER XIX

FOR THE HONOR OF THE TRIBE

All of Woodcraft who could get afloat were on the water, and those not so fortunate were ranged on points of vantage along the pier and on the shore. Dr. and Mother Merriam, with some of the guests of the camp, parents of the boys in for the annual field day, occupied the end of the pier, which commanded the whole course and was directly on the finish line. Among the most interested of the onlookers were Mr. Harrison and Mr. Upton, who had arrived that morning, taking their sons by surprise.

The shore events had been run off in the forenoon, with honors well distributed. The Algonquins, under Chief Seaforth, had won the rifle match. Chief Woodhull had scored heavily for the Delawares by winning the trail finding contest, the stalking event and the mile cross-country "hike" without compass or trail. The relay race, high and broad

jumps had gone to the Hurons, while the Senecas had taken the hundred yard and two hundred and twenty yard dashes. The points for the best individual work during the summer in the various branches of nature study had been awarded, and the total score in the contest between the two wigwams for the deer's head offered for the highest total was Wigwam No. 1—1,460 points; Wigwam No. 2—1,450 points.

For tribal honors the Delawares had a safe margin, but the championship banner would go to the winning tribe in the successful wigwam. Excitement was at fever pitch, for on the outcome of the afternoon events hung the honors of the whole season. It was generally conceded that the Hurons would take the swimming events handily, unless the Delawares developed a dark horse. The Senecas were strong in the canoe work, and they vowed that if the Hurons tied the score with the swimming events they would win the canoe events.

The swimming races were called first. Before the first event Chief Woodhull called the Delawares together. "I haven't much to

say," he said as he looked into the eager faces of his tribe, "only this: I expect every Delaware to do his best, not for his personal glory, but for the honor of his tribe and the honor of his wigwam. It is a great thing to win for yourself, but it is a greater thing to win for your fellows. When you reach the point where it seems as if you hadn't another ounce left just remember that the loss is not yours alone, but of the tribe who are pinning their faith to you. Another thing; fight for second and third places just as hard as for first. It's the small points that are going to win that banner, and it's up to you individually to get every point you can. And," he added with a smile, "don't forget to cheer the other fellows when they win. If we must lose let's be good losers, but—*don't lose!* That's all."

The conditions were perfect for the afternoon's sport. The lake lay like a huge mirror, not a ripple breaking its glassy surface. Clustered about the finish line were the camp canoes and boats and several launches filled with guests from the hotels at the other end of the lake. Several batteaux filled with lumberjacks from the Durant camp lined the course.

"Gee, ain't it great?" said Tug Benson as he and Walter paddled out to the raft from which the swimming races were to start.

"You bet!" replied Walter enthusiastically. "How you feeling?"

"Fine and dandy!" responded Tug. "I'm goin' to take that hundred yards if I never swim another stroke!"

"Wish I felt as sure of a place in my event," said Walter.

"Look a-here, you're goin' to get more than place—you're goin' to win that event! You've got to! What do you s'pose I've been coachin' you for all summer?" said Tug savagely as he glared at his companion.

They were to the raft by this time and as they hopped out and made their canoe fast they heard the starter announcing the first event, which was the hundred yard race. In all events for the afternoon first would count ten points, second five points and third three points.

There were eight entries for this event, three Hurons, two Delawares, two Senecas and one Algonquin.

"Are you ready?" Bang! There was one

splash as the eight boys took the water. At the very first Tug took the lead. The distance was too short to take any chances. He was using the crawl stroke, and his powerful muscles drove him through the water like a fish. But he had need of every bit of strength and skill he possessed. Two of the Hurons were pressing him close, and ten yards from the finish one of them forged up until the two boys were neck and neck. Tug glanced ahead to locate the finish line, and gulped his lungs full of air. Then, burying his face, he tore through the water like some strange amphibian, putting every last ounce of reserve strength into a supreme effort.

Bang! It was the finish gun, and the wild whoop of the Delawares told him he had won, but he had hardly filled his strained lungs when the second and third guns told him by how narrow a margin he had snatched the victory.

"Two points to the good, anyway," he said grimly as Woodhull helped him into a boat.

This made the wigwam score 1,470 to 1,458 and the Delawares and Algonquins whooped deliriously. But their triumph was short

lived. The two hundred and twenty yard event gave the Hurons first and second and the Senecas third. It was now the turn of the Hurons and Senecas to break loose, and they made the most of it, for this gave Wigwam No. 2 a lead of six points.

"It's up to you now," growled Tug in Walter's ear as they stood side by side awaiting the starting gun in the quarter mile event. "I haven't a look-in, for that hundred killed me. But I'm goin' to set the pace for the first half, and you stick right to me. Don't you pay any attention to the rest of 'em, but stick right to me. When I give the word you dig out, and win. Remember, this is no sprintin' match!"

The starting gun banged. When Walter had shaken the water from his eyes and looked around he found Tug at his side, swimming easily with a powerful overhand stroke. Off to the right two of the Hurons were using the crawl and were rapidly forging ahead. Already they had a lead that gave Walter a panicky feeling. Tug looked at him and grinned. "Water's fine," he grunted, for all the world as if this was nothing more than a

pleasure swim. "Get your back into that stroke."

Tug was still swimming easily, but he was putting more power into his strokes. Walter followed his example and kept neck and neck with him. They were now the last of the field. The sprint of the two Hurons had given them a good lead, and this had had its effect on the other swimmers, all of whom were putting forth every effort to overhaul the leaders. Walter found that it took every bit of will power he possessed not to do the same. The pace was beginning to tell on those in front, but Tug never varied his strong easy stroke and presently Walter noticed that they were slowly but surely closing up the gap between them and the nearest competitors.

They had now covered a third of the course and the leaders were still a long way ahead. Would Tug never hit it up? What was he waiting so long for? Perhaps he was, as he had said, "all in," and couldn't go any faster. Ought he to stay back as Tug had told him to? If he should lose out for place the blame would be laid to him, not to Tug. Ha! Tug had quickened the stroke a bit! It was

not much, but there was a perceptible gain with each swing of the arms and kick of the legs.

The half-way mark, and still Tug did not give the word. What was the matter with him? He glanced at him anxiously, but the grin on that astute young gentleman's face revealed nothing, certainly not anxiety. Two or three of the swimmers had begun to splash badly, notably the two Hurons in the lead. Walter had his second wind, and he found that he was holding Tug with less effort than at first. He could hear the shrill yells of the Hurons and Senecas at the finish line as they urged on their braves, and there was an unmistakable note of triumph in every yell. It gave him a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach.

"Now go!" screamed a voice almost in his ear. Dimly he realized that Tug had given him the word. Quickening his stroke he put in every ounce of reserve strength, and at once the result began to show. One after another he overtook and passed the other swimmers until there was only one between him and the finish line. The two Hurons who had led so long were splashing in manifest distress. They

were behind him now, their bolt shot, but still struggling gamely. But the swimmer ahead was a Huron who had come up strongly in the last quarter.

The pace was beginning to tell. Every muscle in his body ached, and his straining lungs seemed to gasp in no air at all. He was neck and neck with the leader now, but his tortured muscles seemed on the point of refusing to act altogether. If he could only rest them just a second! Ha, what was that? "Whoop! Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo! Whoop! Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo! Whoop! Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo! Upton!"

It was the long rolling yell of the Delawares. It seemed to put new life into him. They were calling on him now for the honor of the tribe! He was almost there. Could he make it? He would make it! He gulped his lungs full of air, buried his face in the water and swung into the crawl, and then it seemed to him that his movements were wholly automatic. "For the honor of the tribe. For the honor of the tribe. For the honor of the tribe." Over and over his brain hammered that one phrase.

The bang of the finish gun crashed into it, but for a minute he did not sense what it meant. "For the honor of the tribe," he murmured, weakly paddling the water with his hands.

"And the honor of the boy!" cried a hearty voice, as strong hands caught the slack of his jersey and pulled him into a boat.

He looked up in a daze into the face of Woodhull. "Did I win?" he gasped.

"You sure did!" was the prompt response.

"No, I didn't; Tug did it," muttered Walter to himself as he saw his coach wearily finish at the tail end.

Second place had gone to the Hurons and third to the Algonquins. The score now stood Wigwam No. 1—1,483; Wigwam No. 2—1,481, and the excitement of the visitors was hardly less than that of the tribes as they waited for the canoe events.

The fours were called first. There were four entries, one crew from each tribe, four brawny boys in each canoe, captained by the four chiefs. The distance was half a mile with a turn, start and finish being opposite the pier. A pretty sight they made as they

lined up for the start, each boy on one knee, leaning well over the side of the canoe, blade poised just over the water at his utmost reach.

Almost with the flash of the gun the sixteen blades hit the water and, amid a wild tumult of yells, the canoes shot away like greyhounds from a leash.

"Did you get on to that start of the Hurons —one long stroke, then five short ones and then the regular long stroke!" yelled Billy Buxby, whose sharp eyes seldom missed anything new.

As a matter of fact this little trick had given the Hurons the best of the start, the quick short strokes getting their boat under full headway before the others. But their advantage was short-lived, and it could be seen that as the turning buoys were approached they were last.

"Wonder if they'll spring something new on the turn," muttered Billy, leaning forward until he threatened to upset his canoe. "Ah, I thought so!"

The Delawares had reached the turn first with the Senecas a close second and the

Algonquins third, but the leaders had not fairly straightened out for home when the Hurons turned their buoy as if on a pivot and actually had the lead.

In silence the spectators watched the flashing blades draw up the course. It was anybody's race, a "heart-breaker," as Spud Ely expressed it. Like clockwork the blades rose and fell. The Algonquins were using a long body swing. The Senecas swung their shoulders only, and their stroke was shorter and faster. The Hurons had dropped a little behind, but between the three leaders there was little to choose.

"It's quite primeval, isn't it?" said Mr. Upton as he returned the binoculars which Mr. Harrison had loaned him.

"That just expresses it," replied the latter as pandemonium broke loose in shrill yells from the four tribes urging on their crews. "The forest setting, the Indian craft—it's all like a picture out of early history."

The voices of the captains could now be heard calling for the final spurt. The stroke in all four boats became terrific as, with heads bent, hanging far over the sides, the paddlers

drove their blades through the water, recovered and drove them again, almost faster than the eye could follow. Ten yards from the finish the Senecas, paddling in perfect form, seemed fairly to lift their boat from the water. It was magnificent, and as they shot over the line, winners by a scant quarter length, all four tribes joined in giving them the Woodcraft yell.

The Algonquins were second, beating the Delawares by a scant half length. The score was tied.

The single event was next, and in this both Walter and Hal Harrison were entered. It was an eighth of a mile straight away. This event was confined to the younger boys, and Walter felt that he had an even chance for place, though Tobey of the Hurons was generally picked to win. Harrison was a dark horse. No one knew much about his paddling save his chief, who had coached him in private, and was very chary of his opinion to anxious inquirers.

"I'm going to beat you, Walt," said Hal, as they paddled down to the starting line.

"Not if I can help it," replied Walter with

a good-natured laugh, "but if I'm going to be beaten there is no one I should rather have win than you, Hal. But the Delawares need those points, and I'm going to get 'em if I can."

It was Hal's first race, his novice event, and he was plainly nervous at the start, so that he got away poorly. But he soon recovered and settled down to his work in a way that brought a smile of satisfaction to the lips of Chief Avery watching from the finish line.

Hal had not told his father that he was entered for any of the events. Mr. Harrison had been talking with Dr. Merriam when the race was called, and had paid no attention to the boys going down to the start. It was not until the race was half over that he focussed his glasses on the canoes.

"Bless me, that looks like my boy out there!" he exclaimed, wiping his glasses to be sure that he saw clearly. Then to the delight of the spectators the man of millions showed that he was wholly human after all. He whooped and shouted like an overgrown boy. "Come on, Hal! Come on, boy!" he

bellowed at the top of his lungs. "He's winning! He's winning! Come on, Hal! Hit her up! Hit her up!" And all the time he was pounding the man in front of him, quite oblivious of the fact that it was Dr. Merriam himself.

Hal was hitting it up. After the first few minutes of dumb surprise the Senecas had rallied to the support of their new champion, and as the boy heard his name over and over again at the end of the Seneca yell he ground his teeth and redoubled his efforts. Little by little he forged ahead.

Walter was putting up a game struggle, but he found that his grueling swim earlier in the afternoon was telling now, and in spite of all he could do open water was showing between his canoe and Hal's. "I'll get second, anyway," he muttered, and then as before the old slogan, "For the honor of the tribe. For the honor of the tribe," began hammering in his brain.

It was Hal's race, with Walter second, Buxby third, and Tobey, the expected winner, a poor fourth. Wigwam No. 2 was two points to the good.

The suspense had become almost unbearable as the last event for the afternoon was called. This was a "pack and carry" race, a novelty to most of the spectators, and in some respects the most interesting of all. Four canoes were placed side by side on the ground in front of headquarters. Beside each was spread a shelter tent, blankets and cooking outfit. The four chiefs took their places, each beside one of the outfits. At the signal gun each began to pack his outfit. As soon as he had finished he picked up his canoe, inverted it over his head and carried it to the lake. Returning for his pack he placed it in his canoe, paddled out around a buoy, back to shore, and carried canoe and pack to the starting point.

Woodhull won handily, but big Bob Seaforth, who got a good start and was counted on for second at least, broke a paddle and was put hopelessly out of it. This gave the Senecas and Hurons second and third respectively. The score was once more tied.

It was incredible! Never in the history of the camp had there been anything like it. The field sports over and the championship

undecided! And now it hung on the outcome of a little woodcraft test that hitherto had been simply a pleasant part of the ceremony of lighting the last camp-fire—the test of the fire sticks. It was agreed that the winner should not only have the usual honor of lighting the fire, but that he should score five points for his tribe and wigwam, and that second and third should not count.

Evening mess was a hurried affair. There was too much excitement for eating. Promptly at eight o'clock Dr. Merriam appeared with the other members of the camp force and a few guests who had remained, and the tribes gathered in a circle around the huge pile of fire-wood in front of headquarters. Each chief selected five of his followers to represent his tribe. These squatted in four groups with their fire sticks before them on the ground. Behind each group stood an umpire to announce the first bona fide flame.

The silence was almost painful as Dr. Merriam raised his arm for the starting shot. There was a momentary stir as the boys hastily reached for their sticks, and then no sound save an occasional long breath and the whirr

of the fire drills. Twenty seconds, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three —"Buxby's fire!" cried a voice sharply, and then a mighty yell arose from the Delawares and Algonquins as Billy leaped forward and thrust his tiny blaze into the tinder of the dark pile before him. Wigwam No. 1 had won!

CHAPTER XX

THE HOME TRAIL

WALTER stood on the pier at Upper Lake looking down the long stretch of water. A mist gathered before his eyes and blurred his vision. For the moment he was alone. His father and Mr. Harrison were over by "Woodcraft Girl," which was made fast farther down the pier, and were talking earnestly with Louis Woodhull. How beautiful it was, and how hard to leave. What a glorious summer it had been!

His thoughts ran back to the morning when he had stood in this same place with Big Jim and felt for the first time the mystery of the great wilderness. Was it possible that that was only eight weeks before? What a lot had happened in that short time! What a tenderfoot he had been! How much he had thought he knew of woodcraft, and how little it had been compared with what he knew now.

And yet even now he had learned little more than the elementary lessons. Big Jim had been right; "Woodcraft never yet was larned out o' books." And still how much he owed to those same books. In the light of the knowledge obtained from them how much better he had been able to apply the lessons learned from his practical experiences. Even the big guide had come to see this, and had grudgingly admitted that there might be some good in the despised books, after all.

Walter stretched his arms out toward the lake and the mountains. "How I hate to leave it all," he said, unconsciously speaking aloud.

"Same here," said Hal Harrison, who had come up behind him unobserved. "And a few weeks ago I would have given anything I possessed to get away. Now I can't wait for next summer to come, so that I can get back here. You'll be back, of course?"

"I don't know. I want to. Seems as if I'd simply got to. It's all a matter of whether Dad can afford to let me," replied Walter frankly.

Just then there was a warning toot from the

engine attached to the single coach which was to take them over to Upper Chain to connect with the New York express. Woodhull came up to say good-bye. He, with some of the older boys, would remain in camp for the opening of the hunting season. "I shall look for you back next year, Upton," he said extending his left hand for the Scout grip. "The Delawares need him," he added, as he shook hands with Mr. Upton.

Then turning to Hal with his winning smile he said, "Hal, if we didn't have so much regard for Avery the Delawares would certainly annex you too."

At Upper Chain there was a half hour wait, and the boys started out for a final look at the sawmill village. Suddenly Walter caught sight of a familiar figure. "Jim! Oh, you Jim!" he whooped in delight.

At the sound the big guide turned and his face lighted with pleasure as he strode over to the boys. "I was afraid I was goin' t' miss yer, son," he drawled. "Jest got back from th' county seat, whar I've been t' see th' last o' a friend o' yourn, leastwise fer some time, I reckon."

"Red Pete?" exclaimed both boys together.

The guide grinned. "You've sure hit th' right trail," he said. "Pete's on his way to whar he won't hev t' lock th' doors t' keep folks from takin' a look at his shakedown. He'll be in a sort o' permanent camp 'fore sundown—ten years at hard labor. When thet picter o' yourn, son, was sprung on him he broke down an' owned up t' a lot more mischief than jest th' killin' o' th' King o' Lonesome. Th' warden got him thet day o' the fire on Old Scraggy. When th' warden an' deputy got t' the hanted cabin they found Pete wasn't ter hum. So they made themselves comfortable an' waited. Long 'bout four o'clock in th' afternoon Pete walked right into their arms, an' didn't seem none pleased t' see 'em.

"I hed a suspicion thet Pete knew somethin' 'bout thet fire on Scraggy, an' when they charged him with it he owned up thet he hed set it t' git even with Dr. Merriam fer puttin' the warden on his trail. I reckon, son, thet if Pete had knowed what thet leetle picter box o' yourn was goin' t' do t' him he'd 'a' smashed

it plumb t' pieces th' mornin' yer met up with him an' me over thar in th' deepo. Well," he sniffed the sawdust-scented air, "seems t' me th' air in these old woods will smell some sweeter now thet he ain't a-taintin' it no more."

When they returned to the railway station they found another familiar face awaiting them. It was Pat Malone. A broad grin overspread his freckled face as they approached. Walter was delighted. He had seen nothing of Pat for the last week, and it was with real regret that he had left Woodcraft without an opportunity to say good-bye.

Pat came forward and rather sheepishly shook hands with Hal. The latter blushed, and then manfully he apologized to the Irish lad for his fault in the fish buying episode of the summer. The other's eyes twinkled.

"Sure, 'tis more than mesilf has larned how ter shpell honor, Oi be thinkin'," he said. "Yez can buy no more fish av Pat Malone, but if ye coom in nixt summer 'tis mesilf will show ye where ter catch thim."

Turning to Walter he thrust into his hands a pair of snow-shoes. "Will ye take these ter

show Noo Yorrk th' latest shtoile in shoes?" he asked hurriedly. "Oi made thim for ye mesilf so ye will remimber th' bye in the woods ye licked—but thot ye can't lick now," he added, the twinkle reappearing in his eyes.

"An' say," he concluded as the heavy express drew in to the station, "Oi be goin' ter shtart a Scout patrol av th' Upper Chain byes thot'll make yez hustle fer honors when ye coom back nixt summer."

The farewells were over. Lolling back in the luxury of a Pullman seat Walter and Hal were rushing down through the mountains, back to the busy world, a world of brick and stone and steel, of clang and roar, of dust and dirt and smoke, of never ending struggle, the world to which they had been accustomed, of which they had been a part all their lives. Yet now it seemed a very dim and distant world, an unreal world.

They sat in silence, gazing out at the darkening forest, each buried in his own thoughts, each vaguely conscious that he was not the same boy who had taken this same iron trail into the wilderness a few short weeks before; that there had been a change, a subtle meta-

morphosis for which the mere passage of so brief a space of time could not be accountable. Hal was the first to come out of the revery.

"I guess," he said slowly and thoughtfully, "that I've just begun to learn what life is. They really live it back there."

In the seat in front of them the fathers of the two boys were in earnest conversation, and Mr. Harrison was voicing almost the same thought. "I tell you, Upton, that is real, genuine life up there! Merriam's idea is right. It's great! That isn't a camp up there—it's a 'man factory.' Why, look at that boy of mine! I sent him up there to get him out of the way and keep him out of mischief. Sent him up there a helpless infant in all but years. Been petted and coddled and toadied to all his life. My fault, I admit it. And yet less my fault than the fault of the unnatural and artificial conditions that wealth produces. On the impulse of a moment I run up there to have a look at him, and what do I find? A man, sir!

"I tell you I never in my life put through a big financial deal with one-half the pride

that I watched that boy push his canoe over the line yesterday! And when they told me about that fire exploit of his I was happier than I'd be if I cornered the market to-day. I'm proud of him, sir, just as you're proud of your boy! You've got to strip a man down bare to know whether he can stand on his own feet or not. He's got to, then, or go under. And Merriam is showing them how to do it. Now I've been thinking of a plan for next summer for these two youngsters, and perhaps a couple more from the camp, and the expense, you understand, is to be wholly mine."

He leaned forward and for half an hour the two men were absorbed in earnest discussion. Finally Mr. Upton turned to the seat behind.

"Walter," said he, "how should you like to spend next summer at Woodcraft?"

"Like it!" cried Walter. "There's nothing in all the world I'd like so much!"

Mr. Upton smiled. "Unless," said he, "you like equally well the plan that Mr. Harrison has just proposed, which is a canoe cruise."

"A canoe cruise!"

"Yes, for you and Hal, and one of the older Woodcraft boys, and one other, if you can get them to go with you. How should you like that for the last two or three weeks of your vacation?"

"Hurrah!" shouted Hal, throwing himself at his father, and giving him a bear hug. "That's the bulliest plan you ever made! We'll get Louis Woodhull to go with us, won't we, Walt?"

"The very one I had in mind," said Mr. Harrison.

The train rushed on through the gathering night. It roared over bridges and rumbled through tunnels. It shrieked at lone crossings and slowed to a jolting halt at busy stations. But unheeding, oblivious to it all two happy boys sat in the Pullman section and excitedly discussed who should be invited and where they should go when the next summer should bring to them the promised opportunity to launch their canoes on strange waters.

The Stories in this Series are:

THE BOY SCOUTS OF WOODCRAFT CAMP
THE BOY SCOUTS ON SWIFT RIVER
THE BOY SCOUTS ON LOST TRAIL
THE BOY SCOUTS IN A TRAPPER'S CAMP

THORNTON W. BURGESS

THORNTON W. BURGESS was born in Sandwich, Massachusetts, January 14, 1874. He graduated from the Sandwich High School in 1891, afterward taking a course in Comer's Commercial College, Boston. After a few years in business life he entered the editorial field as one of the editors of the Phelps Publishing and Orange Judd Companies and was for several years one of the editors of Good Housekeeping Magazine, for which he wrote extensively.

For some years he has been a contributor to many of the leading magazines. Over the name of W. B. Thornton he won recognition as a writer on out-door life and nature topics. He is an ardent lover of nature and since boyhood has spent his spare time in the woods and fields. His vacations have been spent with rod, gun and camera, camping and canoe cruising.

Among his books are:

The Boy Scouts of Woodcraft Camp
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